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OR,

The Pacific Slope Detective's Triple Trail.

The Romance of the Man of Three Lives.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,

AUTHOR OF "OLD RIDDLES, THE ROCKY RANGER," "PRINCE PAUL, THE POSTMAN DETECTIVE," "BLUE GRASS BURT," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A WOMAN'S LIFE ROMANCE.

AT a certain point on Kearney street, San Francisco, hung a modest sign that bore the words:

"HOWARD KINWORTH & CO.,
PRIVATE DETECTIVES."

On the afternoon of a pleasant day a young man came out of the detectives' office, set out in the direction of California street, and there took the cable road for "Nob" Hill.

He was a young man, being not more than

"IT IS USELESS TO DENY IT," THE INFLEXIBLE DETECTIVE WENT ON, "I HAVE UNEARTHED THE WHOLE FOUL GAME!"

thirty years of age. Of full medium height, he was well proportioned, and carried himself with motions of ease and grace. His limbs were large and well formed, bespeaking activity, strength and endurance. He was clad in a neat business suit of dark material, wore a black soft felt hat, and carried a light cane. He was good-looking, having clear-cut features, a full and rounded face, and a complexion of a healthful, brownish tint. His face was clean-shaven, his hair and brows were black, and his eyes, of the same color, were keen and flashing.

This young man was Prentiss Kinworth, generally supposed to be the son of Howard Kinworth, the head of the detective firm, but, in truth, only an adopted son. He was one of the foremost detectives of the day, having won distinction by bringing many difficult cases to a successful termination, and was popularly known on the force as "Lightning Flash," so quick did he strike and when least expected to do so. It was also indicative of his adroitness with the revolver and handcuffs.

On entering the car he took a paper from his pocket and proceeded to read, remaining apparently absorbed until the car had gone quite a distance.

Presently he looked out, folded the paper leisurely and returned it to his pocket, and a few minutes later alighted.

He was not in one of the most aristocratic quarters of the city.

Taking a card from his pocket the young detective glanced at it, and going on for a little distance he presently stopped before the retaining-wall of a rather pretty wooden cottage.

Unlike the residences of Murray Hill in New York, the houses of "Nob" Hill, and in fact almost all the residences of San Francisco, are of wood. There are two explanations of this. One is that wooden buildings afford greater security against earthquakes, and the other, the superior warmth and dryness of wood in a moist, cool climate. The basement stories of many, however, are of stone.

Entering the gate or grated archway of the retaining-wall, he sprang lightly up a flight of stone steps under a vine-covered arbor to the piazza.

His ring was answered by a bright-looking Irish girl.

"Is Mrs. Milburn at home?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir," was the answer.

"Please to hand my card to her," he directed, taking one from a dainty case as he spoke and presenting it.

The girl took the card and disappeared, returning in a few moments and inviting him to enter, when she conducted him to a little sitting-room in the rear of the parlors.

This room was richly but plainly furnished, as the detective saw in a brief glance around.

He sat down, and in a short time the door opened and a lady entered.

She was about fifty years of age, as one would have guessed, and was attired in semi-mourning. She was something under the medium height, and rather slender, retaining much of a grace and beauty that clearly had been hers in earlier years. Her face was fair, but sorrowful, and her hair was white, quite in contrast with her bright black eyes.

The detective rose and bowed respectfully.

"Mr. Prentiss Kinworth?" the lady interrogated, with a glance at his card, which she had in her hand.

"That is my name," the detective acknowledged.

"Please sit down."

They both took seats, and the lady went on:

"I presume you are aware of the nature of the communication which I sent to your father, Mr. Kinworth, are you not?"

"I am, madam," was the answer.

"I requested him to send one of his best men to me; one who would give me his whole service for some time, and who, if necessary, would cross the continent in my employ."

"Exactly."

"You are a much younger man than I expected to see, sir, but of course you are equal to the emergency, or you would not have been sent. Inquiring for a detective, my lawyer directed me to the office of Howard Kinworth, with the assurance that none better was to be found in the city. Are you a member of the firm?"

"Yes, madam."

"Very well. Now let us come at once to business. The nature of the work which I require of you may be something a little out of the usual line, but it is such as requires a person of special ability to perform. I want you to lift a veil of mystery which hangs over the first half of my life. Do you think you can do that?"

"Well, madam, that is a rather difficult question to answer," was the detective's response, "considering that I am entirely in the dark. I must be told the story of your life, and the nature of the mystery to which you refer."

"I see that my question was premature. Give me your attention and I will lay the facts before you. In the first place I will relate the story of what I now call the second half of my life, not trusting to my faulty memory, but stating only such things as can be proven. Are you ready to hear me?"

"I am paying close attention to every word you say, madam," the detective assured.

"Twenty-six years ago," the lady started to narrate, "I was brought to San Francisco and put in the private insane asylum kept by Doctor Hubbler. I was partly insane, and was broken down in health. My name was given as Mrs. Abington, a widow, native of Chicago, age twenty-three. The person who placed me there stated that he was my brother. He told the story that the recent death of my husband and children had shattered my reason. He paid in advance for one year's care and treatment, told the doctor that he would visit me during the year, went away, and was never heard from again."

"What I have stated are facts which the records of Doctor Hubbler's establishment have supplied."

"I had not been in the asylum long when it was found that I could play the piano well, and I was allowed to play whenever I desired to do so. When the year was up, and my brother had not been heard from, I was allowed to remain in the establishment on condition that I would teach music to the doctor's little girls and play for the amusement of the other patients. I was gradually improving, though my memory was gone. I remained in the asylum two years longer, and at the end of that time was pronounced perfectly well and sound in mind, and dismissed."

"I sought employment as a teacher of music, and found an engagement in the home of Mr. Morgan Milburn. His wife was an invalid, and I was given the entire charge of their little daughter. In three years Mrs. Milburn died, and two years later Mr. Milburn married me. At that time Mr. Milburn tried to learn something about my past, but he failed utterly. Two years ago Mr. Milburn died, as you know, of course. We had been married fifteen years at the time of his death. We had no children."

"Such is the history of what, as I have said, I call the second half of my life. Now, as I have also said, what I require of you is to solve the mystery of the first half; that is, to complete the record of the past back to the time of my birth. Do you think you can do it?"

"If you have told me all that you are able to tell, madam," the detective responded, "it looks like a formidable task. But I am willing to undertake it. Will you permit me to ask some questions?"

"Ask as many as you like; it is your business to do so."

"Why have you hinted that perhaps I shall be required to cross the continent in connection with this case?"

"Ah! I see that you have the points well in mind. I will answer that question presently."

"Very well. Now, at the time when Mr. Milburn started to investigate the matter, seventeen years ago or thereabouts, you say he failed utterly."

"Yes."

"Did he employ a detective?"

"I think that he did not."

"Do you know what course he did take?"

"I believe that he engaged some lawyer in Chicago to search for my supposed brother, the Henry Mancred I have mentioned—"

"Pardon me," the detective interrupted, "but this is the first time that you have mentioned that name."

"I fully intended doing so. That was the name given by the person who placed me in the asylum."

"Pardon the interruption; I simply wanted to have a clear understanding of the point."

"Quite right. Well, the lawyer could find no trace of him, nor of my former husband under the name of Abington. Nothing whatever was to be learned."

"It is a mystery, truly. But, let me hear the rest of your story. You have led me to believe that you have more to tell."

"You are right, I have more to tell," said the lady, "but it will not be as a connected story."

"That matters little, madam. You started by saying that you would relate first the story of the second half of your life, not trusting to your faulty memory for anything. Now let me hear what your 'faulty memory' has to reveal."

"I will, for it may be helpful to you. I can tell you more now than I was able to tell Mr. Milburn seventeen years ago."

The lady paused in her narration and became thoughtful.

CHAPTER II.

PHANTOMS OF THE PAST.

PRENTISS KINWORTH was much interested in the story to which he had attentively listened.

It was, as the lady had predicted that it might be, a case a little out of the usual line. But he was none the less ready to undertake it.

Just here it may not be out of place to mention that the late Morgan Milburn had been one of San Francisco's millionaires, and that his widow was immensely rich; he having divided his property equally between her and his daughter.

After a thoughtful pause of some moments' duration, Mrs. Milburn presently resumed.

"I hardly know how to begin, now," she observed. "During the past three, four or five years my memory has seemed to be on the very point of returning, yet has never done so. How shall I make clear just what I mean? Did you ever dream that you were dreaming, and seem to have a double existence for the time being? You remember well your dream, perhaps, but what was it that you dreamt you dreamed? Or, better still, have you ever forgotten for a time a very familiar word? You know the meaning of the word well enough; you know the use you would make of it; you can mention half a dozen synonyms, it may be; but the word itself foils your effort to grasp it. Just so the first half of my life baffles me whenever I try to recall it. Can you understand my meaning from so poor an attempt at setting it forth in words?"

"I understand you perfectly, madam," the detective answered. "The first half of your life is as it were in a fog. At times you can just catch the outline of some object which you think is familiar to you, but the moment you attempt to get a nearer view of it, the fog settles down and it is shut out from sight completely."

"That is it exactly, sir. You have described it well. It is of those shadowy outlines in a mental fog that I will now speak. Had you not better make notes as I go along?"

"Yes, I will do so," and Kinworth produced a note-book and pencil.

"First of all I will answer a question which you asked a few minutes ago, and which I said I would answer presently. You asked why I had intimated that perhaps you would be required to cross the continent in connection with this case. It is because everything in the past seems to center at New York. Why this is so, I cannot tell, for I cannot bring myself to believe that I have ever been there. I can form no idea of what New York is like."

"May I ask whether there is any particular place of which you have a recollection?" the detective interrupted.

"Only such places as I have visited during this second half of my life," was the reply.

"Go on with your recital."

"One of the most distinct of those recurring outlines in the fog," the lady resumed, "if you will allow me to employ the figure you have used, is a name. That name is Whitford. Where I have heard it, and whether it is associated with a person or whether a place, I do not know. There the mental fog frustrates me. Then there is a kind, fatherly face that occasionally comes up before me in dim outline. It is the face of an elderly man whose hair is snowy white. Whose it is I cannot remember, but I am sure that I have known that person in the past. Again, I see for a moment a familiar room; and, as in a dream within a dream, I am there, and for one brief instant, almost like the lightning's flash, that is my real life and this second half becomes the shadowy part. Do you follow me?"

"I do; please to go on."

"In that very brief moment of time I seem to catch a glimpse of my former married life. I have a child in my arms. I am very sad. My husband seems just to have left the room. There is a middle-aged woman with me. There is— Ah!"

There had been for a moment a far-away look in the lady's eyes, as the detective, who was watching her closely, had noted, but it suddenly vanished as with the exclamation she seemed to start out of what had been a momentary reverie.

"You have just experienced one of the very memory-flashes of which you were speaking," Kinworth asserted.

"You are right," the lady admitted. "The very scene of which I was speaking came suddenly up before me, but it was gone as suddenly the instant that I tried to put my mind so fully upon it. Oh, it is so trying, so trying," and she passed her hand across her forehead wearily.

"And you saw nothing new this time?" the detective interrogated.

"No, nothing. I have had the same experience—the same vision—hundreds of times before. I am permitted to see just so much, but that is all."

"Then have you told me all there is to tell of that experience?"

"Of that particular scene, yes; but there are other vague memories which come up occasionally. Everything, as I have said, seems to draw to a focal point at New York. Are you acquainted with that city?"

"I am quite at home there, madam."

"Good. Now please to remember that I have not been there during the second half of my life. I do not know that I have ever been there. As I said before, I can form no idea of what New York is like. This being so, let me set forth as well as I can a mental picture of a certain street that holds a place in my mind as a dim recollection, and tell me, then, whether there is anything like it in New York."

"Proceed."

"The street is narrow. There are offices on both sides. There are many of them. The street seems to run slightly up-hill. I am coming up toward the end of it, and there is a constant

stream of vehicles and people crossing on a more busy thoroughfare. Right at the head of the narrow street, but on the opposite side of the one on which the travel is much greater, towers the steeple of a tall church. I am coming up the street—the narrow one—on the right-hand side. I see the church plainly. I go on a little further, and enter a—

Again the far-away look had come into her eyes, as she was speaking slowly and deliberately, but it suddenly vanished, and she came to an abrupt stop.

"Another of the memory-flashes," the detective observed.

"Yes," was the answer. "The scene came suddenly before me, as I put my mind upon it, but it was gone immediately."

"Have you told me all that you started to say?"

"Yes, that is all. Do you recognize the picture?"

"One question first: Does that street in any way suggest to your mind the idea of money or banks?"

The lady sprung excitedly to her feet.

"That was it!" she exclaimed. "I was going into the bank!"

"What bank?"

The recollection had vanished. She passed her hand wearily across her forehead as before, and sat down again.

"I do not know," she made answer. "The picture came again like a flash of light, and I saw that it was a bank I was about to enter. Now it seems to come to my mind that there were many banks there."

"Madam," the detective informed, "you have described Wall street of New York, the stronghold of bankers and brokers."

"Is it possible?"

"Not only possible, but a positive fact. I see it as clearly as though I were standing there this minute."

"It is very strange."

"What more can you tell me?"

"Nothing more that I can think of now. But," taking a ring from her finger as she spoke, "I have here something a little more tangible than mere pictures of a disordered brain. This ring was on my finger when I was put into the insane asylum."

"Ha!" exclaimed the detective, "a clew, however slight it may prove to be!"

He took the ring and looked at it carefully, deliberately and critically. It had been a moderately heavy one, but it was now considerably worn. It had been made to represent the twist of a rope, but it was otherwise plain. On the inside some initials were inscribed, which were now only just discernible. The inscription, as Kinworth made it out, was—"H. A. to C. W."

"Can you read it?" the lady asked.

"Yes," was the answer; and the detective read it aloud.

"That is right," the lady confirmed. "Some years ago the letters were much more distinct in outline than they are now."

"And what ring do you think this is—your marriage ring?"

"I do not know. It cannot have been, if my maiden name was Mancred. That was the name given by the man who said he was my brother, you remember."

"True; but you have said that Whitford is a name that keeps coming to your mind. May I inquire what your first name is?"

"It is Celeste."

"Ha! we are one step further, right or wrong! Do not the letters 'C. W.' stand for Celeste Whitford?"

"I have thought of that, but I cannot decide."

"Let us infer that they do. Now, what of the others? The letter 'A' stands for Abington, it must follow. Shall we say Henry Abington?"

"I do not know; I cannot tell," the lady answered, speaking slowly and looking at the floor in a thoughtful manner. "I know not what to do with the name Mancred. What if this ring has been my mother's wedding-ring?"

"That does not make the case any clearer. In that event the name Mancred would still be in the way, as we would have to infer that your maiden name was Abington. It is a puzzle."

"There is one other view of the matter, and one which it is for me to bring up for discussion," remarked Mrs. Milburn, without raising her eyes from the floor as she spoke. "What I shall now mention has no doubt already occurred to you. Suppose that I have never been married at all. There may be some disgrace in connection with my past."

"Madam," returned the detective, "that thought has come to me and has been considered. I think your fears in that direction are groundless. Let me draw your attention to certain points. First, is your memory to be trusted in regard to things in the past? I think it is, as far as it goes. You have described accurately a street of New York. With this fact before us, what reason have we to doubt the brief picture of your married life which you can bring to mind? None whatever. In the next place we have the evidence of the man who left you at the asylum. He gave your name as Mrs.

Abington, and stated that you were a widow. Now here is a ring which you had on your finger at that time, which has the initials 'H. A.' and 'C. W.' inscribed in it. I take it that this has been your engagement ring, for here we get your married name—Celeste Abington."

"You may be right, but there is still the awful doubt. That name Mancred is always in the way."

"Does that name hold any place in your recollection of the past?"

"No."

"And how about the name Abington?"

"Oh, that seems all right, that seems always to have been my name."

The detective was thoughtful for some moments.

"You have nothing more to tell me?" he presently inquired.

"Nothing more," was the reply. "And now let me ask you if you will take the matter up for me. I am willing to pay liberally, and I want the truth of this affair brought to light, no matter what the past may have been. Will you engage in my service, sir?"

"Yes," Kinworth answered, "I will; you may consider me in your employ from this moment, and, rest assured of one thing—I shall pursue the quest with more interest than in any case I ever undertook."

Satisfactory terms were easily agreed upon, and after some further talk over minor points the detective took his leave, carrying with him the gold ring.

He returned at once to the Kearney-street office, and a few hours later was crossing the Oakland ferry en-route to New York.

CHAPTER III.

A PECULIAR COMPACT.

NEW YORK CITY.

The day and hour the same, allowing for difference of time, as in the previous chapters.

An elderly gentleman mounted the steps of a handsome Murray Hill residence, at the side of the door of which was a neat sign with the name—

"GONDA GONSALVO, M. D."

A colored man-servant answered the bell, and the caller asked:

"Is Doctor Gonsalvo in?"

"Yes, sah; step right in, sah," were the response and invitation, and the darky threw the door open with a respectful bow.

The elderly gentleman entered, and was shown into a handsomely appointed parlor office, where the servant placed a chair and invited him to be seated.

"What name, sah?" he then asked; adding, "If you please, sah."

"Sigbert Parmilye," the caller answered; adding: "Tell your master not to keep me waiting too long."

"Yes, sah."

The darky withdrew, closing the door after him silently, and the old gentleman settled down in his chair to await the doctor's coming.

He was a man about sixty or sixty-five years old, as might have been guessed, and wore a wig of sandy-brown hair, the hair being a little longer than that of wigs in general. On his right cheek was a large mole. He was clean-shaven. When he spoke, it was immediately noticeable that he had no teeth. He was well dressed, in clothes of a dark color, and wore a strikingly heavy gold chain across his vest. He wore spectacles.

He had not long to wait. In a little time the door opened, and Dr. Gonsalvo entered the room.

He was a tall man, and was attired in black. He had black hair, black eyes and a very dark complexion. He was good-looking, but there was something about him that was forbidding. What that something was it might not have been easy to explain. It might have been said that it was suggestive of the snake. He had a straight, finely-waxed mustache, and a small, pointed imperial. He was about forty years of age.

When he came in he greeted his visitor with a smile, stepped forward with extended hand, and exclaimed:

"Mr. Parmilye, I am glad to see you. How do you do?"

He spoke with a slight Spanish accent.

"I am well enough, doctor," responded Mr. Parmilye, giving his hand without rising; "how are you?"

"Never better I assure you. I do not see you very often, but you look as natural as life."

At this they both laughed, though why they did so might not have been clear to any one but themselves.

"Yes, I flatter myself that I hold my own pretty well," Mr. Parmilye responded.

"Well," observed the doctor, "I suppose you want a private interview with me."

"That is what I am here for."

"Very well, we will go into the back room where we will not be disturbed."

The doctor led the way, the old gentleman following him, and they were soon seated in a rear parlor which was quite in contrast with the

other. It was more like some slovenly surgeon and chemist's den. There were books and bottles and instruments lying around in profusion; two skeletons stood guard in their respective corners; and half a dozen or so of grinning skulls occupied various positions on the floor and tables.

"Now," said the doctor, when he had closed the doors and sat down, "we are safe from interruption."

"Very good. Of course you know the business that has brought me here," Mr. Parmilye responded.

"I can guess what it is."

"Well, the time is ripe."

"Then you are fully resolved that you will die, are you?"

"I am. It is necessary that I should. You have forgotten nothing of the arrangements made at our other interview, have you?"

"Nothing whatever, sir. You may fully depend upon me."

"I think I can do so. At any rate I am going to do so. Your pay for the service will be ten thousand dollars."

"And something more, something which I trust you have not forgotten," the doctor reminded.

"And my daughter's hand in marriage, if you can win it. I have not forgotten that."

"Which you will do all you can to bring about."

"It will be my dying request that she marry you."

"Good! I will fulfill my part of it, and I promise you that you shall die like a gentleman ought to die."

"But you will see—"

"Everything is understood, Mr. Parmilye, perfectly understood," the doctor interrupted; "there is no need to go over our former interview again. You may rely fully on me and trust everything to me."

"Well, I do so. And now for the final arrangements."

"Yes, that is the all-important part. When do you want to die?"

"One week from to-night."

"So soon?"

"No sooner, no later," was the cool and calm reply.

It was wonderful with what deliberate coolness they could talk over such a terribly important matter—important to one of them at least.

"And your plans—what are they?" the doctor asked.

"I will tell you, and you must give me close attention, so that you will know well your part."

"I am all attention, Mr. Parmilye."

"Good. My partner, Mr. Blackwall, will start for New Orleans to-morrow. He will be there at the time of my death. One week from this afternoon I shall be at the bank, where I shall be taken ill. I will request to be brought home immediately, and you will be sent for. When you come, you will say that I am dying. I will request you to telegraph for my daughter. You will do so. When she arrives I shall seem to be in a very low condition. My last request will be for her to marry you. Then you will administer the poison to me and I shall pass quietly away. Do you understand it?"

"Perfectly, sir. I shall not fail to do well my part. But the ten thousand dollars—"

"You will find it to your credit at our bank."

"Very good; that is perfectly satisfactory. What further directions have you to give?"

"None so particular as those of our former interview, sir. You assure me that everything is understood. I am content. My life is insured in several companies to the amount of nearly seventy thousand dollars. Fifty thousand of that will go to my partner, Mr. Blackwall, and the remainder to my daughter. My will will be found, and all this made clear."

"And your partner will be made your daughter's guardian, as I understood you to say."

"Yes."

"And of course he will favor my suit for her hand?"

"He will. He understands his part well."

Again they both laughed, as though there was something highly amusing in all this. How it could be amusing for Mr. Parmilye did not appear.

"You are able to make light of it, I notice," the doctor observed.

"And why not?" demanded Mr. Parmilye.

"If I had only one week more of life before me, I think I should feel rather blue. It would be a serious matter with me."

"Oh, it is serious enough with me; but what is the use of repining? The die is cast and I have got to go."

"It was either you or your partner, eh?" with a smile.

"It was either I or Mr. Blackwall. It fell to me, and I shall not back out. One week from this night I die, with your kind assistance."

"Die you shall, sir; rest assured of that. But, see here; why not have a little wine with me? This will be your last visit here, and we may as well drink a parting glass together."

"I have no objections," agreed Mr. Parmilye.

"I shall not be in condition to drink with you when I send for you a week from to-night."

"I should say not."

The doctor rose and touched a bell, and in a few moments his colored man-servant appeared.

"A bottle of the best wine in the house, Tom, and glasses," the doctor directed.

The darky ducked his head and disappeared, and in a little time the wine was served in the proper manner.

"Well, Mr. Parmilye, here is to your health," said the doctor, when the glasses had been filled and the servant had retired. "I cannot say—And to your long life," he added.

"No, not under the present circumstances," responded Mr. Parmilye. "Allow me, however, to drink to your health, long life and future happiness. May you have the success you deserve in winning my daughter's hand, when I am gone, and may you speedily become my successor in the house of Blackwall, Parmilye & Co."

"Thank you, sir, I will drink to that with all my heart."

They drained their glasses, and the doctor filled them again.

"By the way," he observed, "you have arranged that with your partner, I suppose?"

"Yes, it is all arranged," was the assurance.

"And Mr. Blackwall will make the proposal to me, eh?"

"Yes, he will propose it to you."

Once more they found cause for merriment.

"When may I look for that?" the doctor presently asked.

"When you shall have married my daughter, say about a year after my death. He will propose to you that you take my place in the business, and the sign will then be altered to read Blackwall & Gonsalvo."

"Not a bad combination of names."

"Not by any means. Here is to the prosperity of the firm; drink to it with me."

"With pleasure, sir."

Again the glasses were drained, and soon the bottle was empty.

Some further conversation followed, and after a little time the old visitor rose to take his leave.

"Remember," he impressed at parting, "one week from this night I die, and by your hand."

"I shall not fail you," the doctor answered.

CHAPTER IV.

CARRYING OUT THE SCHEME.

THE house of Blackwall, Parmilye & Co. was well known, and was considered one of the substantial private banking establishments of the city.

It was in the financial quarter of the town, in the neighborhood of Wall street.

Mr. Blackwall was the head of the firm, and was at his office every day when not out of town. Mr. Parmilye was not so important a person in the eyes of the head clerk and the other employees. He was at the office only occasionally, and then only for an hour or so at a time. As for the "company" part of the concern, none of the employees knew anything about him—or them, unless possibly the head clerk did.

When Mr. Blackwall had occasion to be away for a day or longer, then Mr. Parmilye, if in the city, was more attentive at the office, and the clerks had long since found that he could hold the reins of business with as firm a hand as his partner.

The head clerk was a man named Jason Griffit. He was about fifty years of age, and was looked upon as knowing the affairs of the house as well as the partners themselves, or better. He was a little man, bald and wrinkled, and one who had very little to say to anybody.

On the morning following the night on which took place the interview set forth in the previous chapter, the bank was opened promptly at the usual hour.

The head clerk had never been known to be one minute late on any occasion. He was a very pink of promptness.

And the other employees were allowed but very little grace. If they were ever more than a certain number of minutes late, Mr. Griffit never failed to report the circumstance to Mr. Blackwall.

On this morning Mr. Blackwall put in an appearance a little earlier than his usual time.

He said a "good-morning" as he passed through the main room of the bank to his private office, and motioned the head clerk to follow him.

Mr. Blackwall was a man whose age might have been guessed at anything between fifty and sixty. He had close-cropped iron-gray hair, was clean-shaved, and had white and even teeth with a little filling of gold in them here and there. He was well-dressed, wore a silk hat, and carried himself very erect.

The head clerk followed him into the office, and stood respectfully by while he removed his hat and coat, donned his office coat, and sat down.

"Griffit," the banker then said, "I start at noon for New Orleans."

"Yes, sir," the head clerk passively observed.

"And Mr. Parmilye will take charge of things here, as usual, during my absence."

"Yes, sir," the same as before.

"You understand that he will have full control, that what he does or directs will be the same as though done by myself. I shall agree in whatever he may do, so you are to obey him in all things without question."

"Yes, sir."

"You will keep an eye open to business none the less, however, and you will report to me on my return all transactions of any importance that may have taken place."

"Yes, sir."

"It is not likely that he will come to the office this afternoon, though he may. To-morrow, however, and thereafter, he will no doubt be here quite regularly."

"Yes, sir."

"You must render him all the assistance you can, for he cannot be expected to understand the business as you and I understand it, Griffit."

"Yes, sir."

"That is all for the present. If I think of anything further, I will apprise you before I start."

"Yes, sir;" and with a respectful little inclination of the head, Mr. Griffit went out.

In a little time Mr. Blackwall called to him.

"Griffit," he said, when the head clerk appeared, "I came away from the house without my gripsack. It is already packed and standing in the hall. Please to telephone for it and have James bring it down. Then go to the Astor House and buy a ticket for New Orleans. Here is the money."

"Yes, sir."

In about twenty minutes the head clerk returned with the ticket, and, some time later, a colored servant came into the office with the forgotten gripsack.

At half-past eleven Mr. Blackwall started. He walked down to the Cortlandt Street Ferry, crossed over to Jersey City, and there took the noon train on the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Mr. Parmilye did not put in an appearance at the bank that afternoon, but on the next morning he was on hand, though somewhat later than Mr. Blackwall's hour.

His appearance was the same as it has been described.

He entered the bank with a slow but not tottering step, walking a little stoop-shouldered, and with his hands behind him. He nodded a greeting to all, and entered the office. There he removed his hat, and laid it on the floor at the side of his chair. He was ready for business.

Presently he tapped a bell that stood on the table, and the head clerk came in.

"Mr. Griffit," he said, "will you please have one of your young men come in here and lower these curtains about half-way? The light is much stronger than I am used to."

"I can do that, sir," answered the head clerk, and the curtains were soon arranged to Mr. Parmilye's satisfaction.

"Thank you for the trouble," the old gentleman repaid. "Can you spare a little time Mr. Griffit?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sit down, then, and give us a little insight into matters. Blackwall went off rather suddenly, and I am not posted as well as I ought to be."

The head clerk sat down, and Mr. Parmilye asked a great many questions, all of which were promptly answered.

"There, that will do, I guess," Mr. Parmilye finally decided. "I am keeping you from your work. If I want to know anything more I will call you."

"Yes, sir."

Many times during the day the head clerk was called in to answer some question concerning the routine of the business, as Mr. Parmilye wanted to be exact in every thing he did, and wanted to follow as closely as possible Mr. Blackwall's manner of conducting the affairs of the office.

The work that passed through Mr. Parmilye's hands, however, was faultless in a business light, and Mr. Blackwall would have found it hard to have improved upon it.

Mr. Parmilye left the office earlier than his partner's hour, but the business of the day was about over and there was nothing to detain him longer.

Next day he had less questions to ask of the head clerk, and after that he was master of the situation and held the reins with a strong hand.

One afternoon, when he had remained later than usual, the little bell in his office rung out several times in succession, sharply.

The head clerk almost fell off his stool in his haste to respond.

When he entered the office he found Mr. Parmilye leaning back in his chair, his hands clasped over his heart, and he panting for breath.

"Are you ill?" he cried. "Shall I send for a doctor?"

"Get me—a lit—a little water," Mr. Parmilye gasped.

The water was forthcoming, and again the head clerk suggested that a doctor should be sent for.

"N—no, not yet," the old gentleman gasped; "send for a carriage and have me tak—taken home as soon—as soon as you can."

The head clerk quickly dispatched the bank runner for a carriage, and returned immediately to the private office, anxious to do whatever he could.

But there was nothing Mr. Parmilye wanted done. All that he seemed to care for was to get home.

In a very short time the carriage was at hand, and Mr. Parmilye was assisted into it, one of the clerks of the bank getting in with him, and he was driven rapidly homeward.

At the last moment he had requested the head clerk to telephone for Dr. Gonsalvo, giving him his address, and as soon as the carriage had started, the head clerk had carried out his instructions.

Mr. Parmilye lived on a quiet up-town street. He was a widower, and had only one child—a daughter. She was at present in Philadelphia, visiting some friends. The house was managed by a housekeeper.

He had always been a very peculiar and eccentric man. He would not sleep in his home on an average of more than two or three nights in a month. He was something of a traveler, too, and would occasionally be away for weeks at a time. It was understood that he had crossed the ocean something like thirty times, and that he had been three times around the world. Such was his own account of himself.

He had a room in a building down-town, where he had a library, and it was understood that he spent a great deal of his time there, when in the city. He had a bed in the room, and it was known that he slept there occasionally at least.

When the carriage reached his residence it was found that Dr. Gonsalvo was already there, and he and the bank clerk carried him into the house and up to his room.

"What do you think of him, sir?" the clerk asked, aside, when the doctor had felt of the old gentleman's heart.

The doctor's face was serious.

"His relatives had better be notified," he answered. "He will not live many hours."

"I will tell Mr. Griffit as soon as I return," said the clerk.

Just then it was seen that the old gentleman wanted to say something, and the doctor bent over him.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Tell—tell the young man to—to have Mr. Griffit telegraph at once for Mr. Blackwall."

The doctor repeated what he had said, and the clerk hastened away to carry out the instructions.

No sooner was he gone than Mr. Parmilye sat up and smiled. He looked no more ill than he had on the previous evening.

"How do I play the part?" he asked.

"Fine," ejaculated the doctor in a low tone. "Keep it up just the same and you will deceive them all."

"Good. Now see to it that my daughter is sent for, and every thing else carried out according to programme."

"I will do so, sir."

"Have you the poison ready?"

"Yes, it is all ready. Within half an hour after the arrival of your daughter you will be a dead man. Hist! I hear steps. Your housekeeper is coming."

Mr. Parmilye fell back again as ill as he had been before.

CHAPTER V.

AN UNLOOKED FOR ADVENTURE.

"SIR, will you please to protect me from the disagreeable attentions of this ruffian until I can claim the protection of the policeman on the other side?"

Prentiss Kinworth looked up in great surprise.

It was evening, and the passengers of an incoming train on the Pennsylvania Railroad were transferring themselves from the cars to the ferry-boats at Jersey City.

Among the passengers was Detective Kinworth, about at the end of his long and tiresome journey. He had just taken his seat in the ladies' cabin of the Cortlandt-street boat, when a lady who had entered just behind him stepped up close to him and, in a low but excited tone, uttered the words quoted.

She was handsome, apparently not over twenty-four or five years of age, and was richly and well dressed. She was a brunette, a little above the average of her sex in height, and her form was perfect. She had jetty hair and eyes, and the flush that was now upon her velvety cheeks added a new charm to her beauty.

Close behind her came a man who at first glance looked to be at least thirty-five, though he was perhaps some years younger actually. He was tall, wore a silk hat of the latest edict of Fashion, and considerably overdressed. He undoubtedly considered himself a thoroughbred swell, and desired to be mistaken for a gentleman; but he had withal a dissipated look that bespoke his true character.

It was this man that the young lady indicated

as she uttered the cutting words—"This ruffian!"

The detective looked up in great surprise, as stated, but he was not slow to act. He took in the situation at a glance, saw that the person who made the appeal was unmistakably a lady, rose quickly to his feet, lifting his hat politely as he did so, and answered:

"With pleasure, madam."

The cabin was fast filling up, and as he rose Kinworth motioned the lady to take his seat.

"Thank you," she said, courteously, and availed herself of the offer.

She had attracted but little attention, and only three or four of those near by had overheard her words.

The detective immediately faced the man of whom she had complained.

"Sir," he said, "I know not who you are, but this lady has appealed to me for protection from you, and she shall have it. You had better not make a scene, I warn you."

The words were uttered in a low but positive tone.

The man cast upon the detective one look full of hatred, seeming to measure him as he did so, and passed on through the cabin and out.

Kinworth took up his gripsack and found another seat a little distance away, and presently the boat started.

Nothing was seen of the man on the way across the river, and of course the detective did not look for him, nor did he seek to make the further acquaintance of the lady.

When the boat was entering the slip on the New York side he took up his gripsack, crossed over to where the lady sat, and inquired:

"Shall I accompany you off the boat, madam?"

"I shall be glad if you will do so, sir," was the reply.

The lady rose, as the other passengers were now doing, and together they passed out with the crowd, Kinworth looking around for the man when they reached the open air.

"Do you see anything of that man?" the lady quietly asked.

"Yes," the detective answered, just then getting sight of him, "he is over on the other side of the boat, and is looking this way."

"Please to let me know if he follows us when we go off, and if he does I will be greatly obliged to you if you will assist me to find a carriage as soon as possible when we reach the street."

"I will do so with pleasure."

When they left the boat the man did follow them, or at any rate he kept them in sight, and the detective lost no time in finding a carriage for his protegee.

Running his eye along the line of vehicles in waiting, he quickly made his selection, and led the lady forward to it.

"Where to?" the driver asked, as he opened the door.

"To Union Square," the lady directed; and, turning to Kinworth, after she had entered, she added:

"Please to accept my thanks, sir, for the kind service you have rendered me."

"The pleasure of having been of service to a lady is reward sufficient," was the gallant response; and, lifting his hat politely the detective closed the door of the carriage and motioned the driver to go.

The carriage turned and was off immediately, and as it wheeled around into Cortlandt street the detective caught a glimpse of a pair of bright eyes looking out and back in his direction.

At that moment a hand fell upon his arm.

Turning quickly, Kinworth found that his accoster was the man from whom the lady had sought protection.

"A word with you, sir," the fellow said.

"Well, what is it?" the detective coolly asked.

"Why did you interfere in a matter which did not concern you?" was the angry demand.

"You are a fool to ask the question, in the first place," was the answer he got; "and in the next place it was a matter which *did* concern me the moment the appeal for protection was made. Do you want to know anything more?"

The detective's words were uttered with deliberate calmness.

"No, I do not want to know anything more," was the retort, "but I want to let you know how I resent such interference with my business, and to teach you a lesson for your freshness. Take that!"

It required all of Kinworth's wonderful quickness to enable him to escape a stinging blow in the face.

"You cur!" he instantly exclaimed; and, in the same instant, out flew his left hand and the fellow went over upon his back, his hat flying in one direction and his cane in another.

"Hello! Hold on, there! Stop that!" cried out a policeman, and he came running up. "What is all this about?" he demanded of the detective.

"That fellow tried to strike me, and I have returned the compliment; that is about all, I guess," Kinworth answered, calmly.

"What did he try to strike you for?"

"Ask him."

The fellow had by this time got upon his feet, and was recovering his hat and cane.

A crowd was already forming.

"I struck him for interfering with what did not concern him," the man growled angrily.

"What did he do to you?"

"He knows."

"Well, now," the officer advised, you had better let the matter drop right where it is and go off quietly. If you don't I shall have to run you in."

"The trouble is at an end, so far as I am concerned," declared the detective, who had not even set down his gripsack, which was in his right hand.

The other man would have shown better sense had he taken the same course, but smarting under the blow he had received his blood was boiling and he was hot-headed.

"Well, it is not at an end so far as I am concerned, then," he angrily exclaimed. "I set out to resent your interference in my business, and I'm going to make you smart for it. Officer, arrest that man, and I will go with you and make a charge against him."

At this Kinworth began to lose patience.

"You are a greater fool than I took you to be," he declared. "Let me have a word to say about this, officer."

By this time the crowd was becoming quite large and was pressing around closely, and the policeman, too, was losing patience.

"Be quick about it," he ordered.

"Well," explained the detective, "I had just entered the ferry-boat at Jersey City, when a lady came up to me and asked my protection against this fellow. I obliged her, and when I had seen her safely into a carriage on this side, and the carriage had started off, then this fellow came up, demanded to know what right I had to interfere with his business, and struck at me. I knocked him down. Now that is the whole case in a nutshell, and if he insists upon having me arrested, all right. Take us to the station, officer, and we will have it out there."

This action seemed to take the other man somewhat aback. He seemed more inclined to recede from the position he had taken.

"I am willing to let up on you," he began, "if—"

"I don't ask you to," the detective broke in. "We'll go to the station and you can make your charge against me."

"Really, I don't want to be too hard with you. I guess I have given you a lesson that you won't soon forget. Now that I come to think of it, I have an important engagement on hand. You need not arrest him, officer; I will let it drop."

The crowd laughed heartily at this.

"It looks to me as though the shoe would fit the other foot a good deal better," remarked the policeman. "Say the word, sir," to Kinworth, "and I'll arrest him on your complaint."

"No, let him go," the detective directed. "He has punished me enough," in a sarcastic tone, accompanied with a smile.

The fellow slunk away, muttering something that sounded like a threat, but which, owing to the laughter of the crowd, could not be understood; and after passing a few remarks with the policeman Kinworth too departed, and the crowd dispersed.

The detective went to a hotel, had supper, and soon retired for the night. He was weary, from his long journey, and much in need of rest. But he did not easily fall asleep. Now that he had reached New York, his thoughts naturally reverted to the case he had in hand, and they were, too, not by any means free from reflection upon his recent adventure.

The face of the lady whom he had befriended kept coming up before him, and he could not dismiss it. There had been something about her face that seemed familiar to him, and yet he could not tell what it was. He was sure that he had never seen her before, and he reasoned that it was pretty certain that he would never see her again. But the memory of her face would haunt him, and to drive it away he put his mind more fully upon the case in which he was engaged and sought to outline a plan of action.

He had little enough material with which to begin his work. Mrs. Milburn's correct description of Wall street had satisfied him that she was right in imagining that her past was somehow connected with New York. Accepting that as true, it followed that she had at some time or other been familiar with Wall street, and that something in her past was in some way connected with a bank on that street. Only one or two other slight clues were at his command. There was the name Whitford, which was one of the landmarks in Mr. Milburn's mental Sahara; and then the ring with the inscription—"H. A. to C. W." That ring he was now wearing upon the little finger of his left hand.

Finally, after he had turned the case over in his mind several times, and had laid out a plan of action for the morrow, he fell asleep and slept soundly until morning.

CHAPTER VI.

A DYING REQUEST DENIED.

WHEN the carriage containing the lady whom Prentiss Kinworth had favored had turned into

Cortlandt street, the lady turned away from the window and settled down upon the seat.

"It is good to find that there are gentlemen in the world still," she reflected. "My attention was drawn to him the moment I saw him after I entered the cars at Philadelphia, and when he assisted that old lady to alight at Newark with her many parcels, which he did with as much care and kindness as though she were his mother, then I knew that I could safely appeal to him for protection from the fellow who was so annoying me."

"Still," her reflections ran on, "I would not have done so, had not the ruffian forced his attentions upon me still more as I walked from the cars to the ferry-boat. After my request was made I was not troubled further. The fellow seemed fairly to cower in his presence. I wonder what his name is?"

With that she dismissed the incidents from her mind as far as possible, and turned her thoughts into a far more serious channel.

As she did so a certain saddened expression of her face grew deeper still, and ere the carriage had gone far she was weeping.

"Poor, dear papa!" she said, half-aloud, when her outburst of grief had somewhat subsided, "I hope I shall find him better."

She dried her eyes, after a little while, and became more calm, and at length the carriage arrived at Union Square and stopped.

Opening the door a little, she gave the further direction of a number and street, and the carriage rattled on, stopping presently before the home of Mr. Sigbert Parmilye, the banker.

The driver got down from his box and helped her out, she paid his charge, and then with lagging steps went up the stoop to the door.

It was the housekeeper who opened it to her.

"Oh, Rachel, how is papa now?" the young lady inquired anxiously, as soon as she had greeted the old housekeeper with a kiss.

Rachel Swann was the woman's name, and she had been Mr. Parmilye's housekeeper for many years. In truth, he had never had any other. She was about sixty years old now, and had always seemed like a mother to her employer's daughter, whom she had had charge of from babyhood.

"He is no better, dear," was the kindly but sorrowful answer. "I hate to tell you, but the doctor says that he cannot live."

The young lady burst into tears and sunk down upon a chair in the hall.

It was some minutes before she ventured to speak, and the housekeeper did not disturb her.

"Can I go to him?" she presently asked.

"Yes, you can—you must—go to him," was the answer. "He has been asking for you every little while. I thought I would let you become a little calm first."

"I will go to him immediately."

The young lady laid off her hat and wrap, and the housekeeper led the way up to the room where Mr. Parmilye was.

She knocked softly at the door, and Dr. Gon-salvo opened it to them.

"It is Miss Parmilye," the housekeeper announced; "she has just arrived. Can she enter?"

"Come right in, Miss Parmilye," the doctor invited, speaking very kindly and tenderly, and he opened the door wider.

The daughter entered, the old housekeeper following her.

It was plain to be seen that Mr. Parmilye was growing worse. He was now in bed, and his breath was very short and quick.

The doctor closed the door and went to the bedside.

"Mr. Parmilye," he announced, "your daughter is here."

The old gentleman opened his eyes, and made an effort as though to sit up. The doctor motioned to the housekeeper, and they together bolstered him up with the pillows.

"Essylt, my child, come here," the old gentleman then requested, speaking faintly.

His daughter advanced to his side, weeping silently.

The doctor turned and spoke to the housekeeper, and they left the room, the doctor saying as he went out:

"I will be within hearing, Miss Parmilye, if I am wanted."

They went out, closing the door after them, and father and daughter were left alone together.

"My child," the old gentleman spoke, taking one of her hands in his, "I am about to leave you forever."

"Oh! do not say that, papa," the girl cried, her tears streaming forth anew; "you may get better."

"Never in this world, Essylt, dear. I have but a short time longer to live. In a little while I shall be no more, and it is very important that you listen to what I have to say while I have strength to talk."

"You will tell me that secret of the past, papa? You will tell me what I have so many times asked to know?"

"No, not that, my child, not that; but I will have something to say about it. What I want to say to you more immediately concerns you."

"I am listening, papa."

"And you surely cannot refuse my dying requests."

"I will promise you anything that I possibly can, papa."

It is nothing impossible that I shall require of you. Essylt, my child, I am far less wealthy than you have had reason to suppose. When I am dead, and my affairs come to be wound up, there will not be a great deal left for you. But I have provided for you none the less. It is my desire that you make your home with my partner, Mr. Blackwall. I mentioned this to him long ago, and it is his request as much as mine. Will you do this?"

"What of Mrs. Swann, papa?"

"I have mentioned her in my will, and she can take care of herself comfortably for the rest of her days. But, your answer?"

"If you really desire it, papa, and it has been so arranged," the daughter answered, "I am willing."

"That is right. Then this house can be sold, and whatever there is for you Mr. Blackwall will invest for you to the best advantage. My will was made some years ago, and in it he is mentioned as your guardian. Of course you are too old now for him to hold that relation to you, but it is my request that you pay heed to his counsel—as much, if possible, as you would to mine. Can you do this?"

"I will follow your wishes as far as possible, papa."

"Thank you, Essylt, thank you."

Everything he said was in a fragmentary manner, and the foregoing occupied several minutes.

Mr. Parmilye paused for breath.

"And about the past, papa," Essylt presently reminded; "you said you would mention that."

"The past, my child," the father made answer, "must remain a sealed book to you. It is better so. Do not try to fathom that which, were you to learn the truth, would make you unhappy."

"But, tell me something of my mother; please do!" the girl pleaded. "You have been away from home so much, papa, as I have too, that we have seen but little of each other, it seems to me. I have felt that I have been an orphan indeed. This is a request which I have made many times before, papa, and, at such a time as this I hope you will not put me off."

"Still, I must do so. There are things which it is better for us not to know, and this is one such to you. But, I will tell you something. You are the issue of an honorable marriage. Ask me no more."

Mr. Parmilye's voice was growing weaker, and his breathing seemed more labored.

"You had better call the doctor in again," he directed.

Essylt stepped quickly to the door and spoke the doctor's name, and he was on hand immediately.

When he came to the bedside, he shook his head ominously.

"Is he worse?" the weeping girl asked in a whisper.

The doctor nodded in assent.

"Oh! he must not die!" she sobbed; "can you not save his life?"

"Nothing can save him," the doctor answered sorrowfully.

"Essylt! Essylt, my child!" the old gentleman faintly exclaimed.

"Yes, papa, here I am," the young lady responded, and she stepped again to the bedside.

"Do not leave me yet," was the request. "There is one other promise I would exact of you, my child."

"And what is that, papa?"

"It is a request that I have made before. I desire you to become the wife of Doctor Gonsalvo. Say that you will obey me in this, Essylt."

The young lady was silent, her face hid in her hands.

For some moments no one spoke, and then Dr. Gonsalvo laid his hand ever so tenderly upon the shoulder of the young lady, saying:

"This is very painful to me, at such a time as this, but I feel that I ought to speak. Become my wife, Essylt Parmilye, and I will devote the rest of my life to making you happy. In the presence of your father I say this."

"It is my dying wish," Mr. Parmilye gasped. "Essylt, he has my full and free consent to your hand. Say that you will marry him."

The daughter was silent.

"It is my dying request," Mr. Parmilye again gasped.

"I will marry you on one condition," Essylt suddenly declared, turning to the doctor; "on one condition and none other."

"What is that?" the doctor asked.

For the instant Mr. Parmilye forgot that he was dying, stopped panting for breath, and listened.

"The condition is that you save my father!" Essylt announced.

"Would that I could do it!" the doctor exclaimed, with fervor.

Just then Mr. Parmilye became much worse, and Dr. Gonsalvo hurriedly requested Essylt to leave the room.

When she was gone Mr. Parmilye sat up with a smile.

"It was of no use," he observed in a whisper. "You will have to try it when I am gone. Well, good-by, doctor," offering his hand; "I am tired of shamming, so let us have the real thing."

The dark-visaged doctor shook hands with his patient, bade him good-by, and stepping back, took from his pocket a little vial. Dropping a few drops of its contents into a spoon containing some water, he stirred it for a moment with a pin, and then directed Mr. Parmilye to swallow it.

The banker did so. In a few moments his face grew ghastly, and his breathing was hardly perceptible. The doctor stepped to the door and called. Essylt, the housekeeper, and others, came in. In a few minutes Mr. Parmilye was dead.

CHAPTER VII.

KINWORTH'S ROYAL BEGINNING.

WHEN Detective Kinworth arose, on the morning after his arrival in the city, he felt as good as new.

Some time after he had breakfasted he sauntered out from the hotel, with the intention of making a stroll through Wall street his first business of the day.

Going out to Broadway he walked leisurely down to that street, turned into it, and went down toward the river for some distance. Presently he stopped, turned, and retraced his steps toward Broadway.

"It is just about as Mrs. Milburn described it," he mused, looking up toward Broadway, "and just about as I remembered it. It is a narrow street, slightly up-hill, offices on both sides, and yonder across Broadway stands old Trinity. There is no mistaking this well-known street."

Kinworth was, as he had told Mrs. Milburn, quite at home in New York, though it was now some years since he had been there.

"And now for that name—Whitford," he continued, in thought. "I must see if it is to be found anywhere around here."

He looked at the signs on both sides of the street, but saw nothing of the name he wanted, and was soon at Broadway again.

"Well, so much for the first move," he reflected. "Now to learn something about the Whitfords of New York of twenty-five to thirty years ago."

He returned to the hotel.

There he took a glance at a city Directory, to learn where it was published, loitered around for a little time, and set out again.

In due time he was at the office of a Directory company, where, having stated what he wanted, the file of old New York Directories was placed at his disposal.

Going back thirty years, he took up the one of that date and turned to the name Whitford. Almost immediately he found what he felt sure, was what he wanted. It was the name of one Reuben Whitford, a banker, of No. — Wall street.

Making a note of this, and of the man's residence as well, Kinworth looked for the same name in the succeeding Directories. He found it in four others, and then it disappeared. He made a note of that point also.

When he left the office of the Directory company he felt that he was making much better progress at the outset than he had hoped to make. Of course he had placed strong reliance upon the finding of the name Whitford in the old Directories, but he had not hoped to find the additional clew, at the very first effort, of one Whitford who had been a banker on Wall street.

He had expected that he would have to make a thorough canvass of the whole city, hunting up everybody of that name that was to be found, and tracing the Whitford genealogy until a Celeste Whitford came to light.

He returned immediately to Wall street.

Arriving there, he looked up the number the Directory had furnished and went in. It was a banking and broking establishment.

Stepping up to a window he inquired whether the president of the concern was in. He was not, but one of the vice-presidents was. Kinworth requested to see him, and was conducted into his office.

The vice president was an elderly man, very trim in appearance.

"I have called to see whether you can give me any information concerning one Reuben Whitford, who carried on a banking business at this number about twenty-seven years ago," the detective explained.

"I can not, sir," was the prompt answer. "All that I know is that such a person did occupy this building about the time you have named."

"Can you direct me to any one who is likely to know something about him?" the detective asked.

"I can not, sir. I— But, hold on, I will ask our head bookkeeper."

The tap of a bell was immediately answered, and the vice-president sent for the person he had mentioned.

In a few moments he came.

"Gentleman inquiring about Whitford who used to do business here," the vice-president tersely explained; "can you tell him anything?"

"Nothing more than that, sir," was the answer. "I think, however," the man added, "that one of his clerks is now in the bank of Blackwall, Parmilye & Co."

"What is his name, and where is their bank?" the detective asked, the two questions in one.

"His name is Jason Griffit," the bookkeeper answered; and he gave the street and number.

Kinworth returned thanks for the information, and left the office.

He went from there to the banking-house of Blackwall, Parmilye & Co., where he made inquiry for the person whose name had been furnished.

Jason Griffit was on hand, and finding that the caller wanted to see him in private, invited him into the office of the heads of the house.

When they were in the office and seated, then the detective made known his business.

"I want to find out something about Reuben Whitford and his family," he set out with saying, "and as you used to be in his employ I take it for granted that you can give me some information."

He did not ask Griffit whether he had been in the service of Mr. Whitford or not, but employed the positive assertion.

The eyes of the head clerk opened wide, a new light gleamed in them, and an expression of determined firmness came over his face.

"What do you want to know?" he asked.

"All that you are able to tell me," was the answer.

"That is hardly to the point, sir. You will have to make your questions more direct."

"Very well, I can do that. I know that Mr. Whitford had an office on Wall street about twenty-seven years ago. What became of him immediately after that?"

"He died, sir."

"As I naturally inferred. What became of his daughter Celeste?"

The form of the question led to the immediate inference that the inquirer had positive knowledge of what he was saying; that is, that he knew that Mr. Whitford had had such a daughter.

"I do not know what became of her," the head clerk answered.

One point gained. This was acknowledging that Mr. Whitford had had a daughter Celeste!

"You knew the young lady, I presume?" the detective put next. "She used to visit the bank."

The head clerk hardly knew how to answer. Who could his questioner be? He was too young a man to be making these assertions from his own knowledge of the matter. In whose interest was he asking them? Why were the inquiries being made?

"I remember seeing her there," he owned.

"She visited the bank after her marriage, of course."

"Yes."

"About how long had she been married when her father died?"

"Four years or so, I should think," was the answer.

"Where was Abington employed?"

Another question which bore the form of asserted knowledge.

"He was employed in the bank," the head clerk readily informed.

The detective was gaining positive knowledge of the case with almost every question. He believed that Griffit had no interest whatever in trying to conceal any of the facts from him.

"And you say you have no information as to what became of him and Celeste after Mr. Whitford's death, if I understand you aright."

"None whatever, sir."

"How many children had they, three or two?"

Another half expressed assertion. Kinworth had a clew to but one child, but he was after facts and framed his questions accordingly.

"They had two children," the clerk informed.

"Only two, eh? And what were they, boys?"

"The oldest was a boy, I believe."

The detective stored every point away carefully.

"Let me see, what was Abington's first name?" he next questioned. "It was Henry, was it not?"

"Yes, that was it."

"So I thought. By the way, did Reuben Whiteford have a son?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"Was Celeste his only child?"

"I believe she was."

"And his wife, what of her?"

"He had been a widower for some years, sir."

Griffit was answering the questions promptly and freely, and the detective was more than ever inclined to believe that he had no reason to withhold anything that he might know.

"Can you tell me anything about Henry Abington?" he further questioned. "I understand that he is now dead, and I would like to learn something of his family connections. To be more plain with you, I want to learn where he

died, and what became of his widow and children."

"Then you know that he is dead?"

"Well, such is the supposition," the detective qualified. "If I can find his relatives I can soon get at the truth of that point."

"I am sorry to say that I cannot give you any information about him," Griffith responded to the question. "I was never intimate with him, though we were both in the same office."

"Can you direct me to any one who will be likely to know something about the matter?"

"I can not."

"Can you tell me where I can find other persons who were employed in Mr. Whitford's office?"

"I have lost sight of them all, sir."

"Well, surely you know of some one with whom Mr. Whitford himself was on intimate terms. Some person who, perhaps, may—"

There was a light knock at the door at that moment, followed immediately by its being opened, and, much to the surprise of the detective, the person who entered was the young lady who had appealed to him for protection on the previous night.

It was Essylt Parmilye.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLERK GRIFFIT GAINS POINTS.

DETECTIVE KINWORTH was surprised indeed. Here was a person whom he had never expected to see again.

The lady spoke to Mr. Griffith, with just a glance at his companion, and was about to address him further, when she paused to take a more scrutinizing look at Kinworth.

The glance, the pause, the glance again—all occupied only a second.

At the second look she recognized her friend of the evening before, and with a slight acknowledging bow, said:

"We meet again. This is very unexpected."

As soon as he had received her recognition Kinworth was upon his feet, and bowing politely, he responded:

"It is an unexpected pleasure to me. I had no hope that I should ever see you again."

In order, then, to avoid what he felt might be an awkward pause, the detective turned immediately to Mr. Griffith and added:

"Mr. Griffith, I will withdraw until this lady has transacted her business—"

"Do nothing of the kind, sir," Miss Parmilye interrupted. "Resume your seat, please. If you will pardon me for having intruded, and will allow me to engage Mr. Griffith's attention for a moment, I will make haste with my errand here and shorten as much as possible the interruption I have made."

"Make no mention of that, and do not hurry yourself," Kinworth responded, and he sat down again, Griffith having meantime provided a chair for Miss Parmilye.

The detective noticed that the lady's manner was very sad, and that she showed signs of recent weeping.

"Mr. Griffith," she addressed the head clerk, "I have come down to draw some money, if there is any plan by which I can do so."

"Have you a personal account here?" the clerk asked.

"No," was the answer, "but of course my father had. Very unfortunately he had no money in the house when he died, and but very little in his pocket, and I must have some for immediate use."

"There is no way that you can draw any, I am sorry to say," the head clerk informed, "but I can advance you some as a personal loan until Mr. Blackwall returns and affairs are straightened out. How much do you require?"

"I will accept your kind offer, Mr. Griffith," the lady promptly agreed. "Can you let me have five hundred dollars?"

"Certainly. I will fill out a check for the amount."

Mr. Griffith took up a blank check and filled it, and when he had done, handed it to the lady, saying:

"Just indorse this, if you please, Miss Parmilye, and I will get the cash for you immediately."

Kinworth noted the name, and drew rapid conclusions. This must be a daughter of the Parmilye of the firm, and he must have recently died.

Miss Parmilye took the pen and was about to sign her name to the back of the check, when the door opened and Dr. Gonsalvo entered.

"Pardon this intrusion," he observed, with a slight bow; "I have followed you here, Miss Parmilye," addressing the lady as he advanced into the office. "Thinking that I could be of service to you at this time, I called at the house just now, and learning that you had come here, followed. Mrs. Swann told me what your errand here is, and you will confer a favor on me if you will allow me to come to your assistance."

"I thank you for your thoughtful kindness, Doctor Gonsalvo," responded the lady, "but I am not in need of assistance now. Mr. Griffith has kindly advanced all the money I require."

"But," the doctor urged, "you have not in-

dorsed the check yet; destroy it and accept the favor from me instead."

"Oh, no, I could not think of it, after having troubled Mr. Griffith. I thank you just the same, however."

With that the lady affixed her signature to the check and returned it to the clerk, who immediately left the room.

Dr. Gonsalvo was looking at Kinworth in an inquiring manner.

"A gentleman who rendered me a real service last night, and whom I have just met again by chance," Miss Parmilye observed, in a half-apologetical introductory manner; "I have not the honor of knowing your name, sir," to Kinworth.

"My name is Kinworth," the detective informed.

"Permit me to make you acquainted with Doctor Gonsalvo."

It was, after all, a mere casual introduction, into which the lady had been in a measure forced by circumstances. It had, however, opened the way for her to find out Kinworth's name.

Nothing further was said, after the doctor and Kinworth had greeted each other stiffly, for Mr. Griffith returned with the money he had gone to bring.

"Here is the amount, Miss Parmilye," he said, as he put it into the lady's hand. "I have brought it in tens, fifties and hundreds."

The lady accepted it, thanked him, and with a pleasant "good-day" to him and Kinworth, went out, Dr. Gonsalvo going with her.

Mr. Griffith resumed his seat.

"From what I have heard said," observed the detective, "I take it that that lady is a daughter of the Mr. Parmilye of this firm, and that he has recently died."

"You are right," Mr. Griffith confirmed, "she is his only child. He died last night. But, to return to our conversation, is there anything more that I can answer? If so, let me hear your questions."

"I just asked you if you could name some person with whom Mr. Whitford had been intimate during his last years, or something to that effect," Kinworth reminded.

"I cannot," was the answer.

"Very well, I will not trouble you with any more questions, sir. I presume you have given me all the information you are able to give, along the line of the questions I have already asked."

"I think I have, sir."

"Then I will take my leave," and the detective rose. "I am very thankful to you for the information you have given me."

Kinworth had reason to feel proud of the success he had met with. Things had turned out much better than he had hoped for. Now his clues to the case were reliable, and he had a solid foundation to build upon.

There was one point more, however, upon which he wanted to sound Mr. Griffith, and that was regarding the name Mancred.

"By the way," he observed, as he was moving toward the door, "where is Mancred?"

This was asked in the most matter-of-fact way that can be imagined.

The answer surprised him not a little.

"He is in New Orleans, but he has been telegraphed for and— But, do you refer to Mr. Blackwall?"

The head clerk came to a sudden stop and put the question. Mancred happened to be Mr. Blackwall's first name.

"Is that his name?" Kinworth asked.

"Yes, that's his name; did you mean him?" the head clerk affirmed and persisted.

"No, I did not mean him," the detective confessed. "I am under the impression that there used to be a Mancred employed by Mr. Whitford. Do you remember any one of that name there?"

"No, I do not."

The detective had noted that Mr. Griffith was becoming more reserved in the latter part of the interview, so he ended it by saying:

"Well, I will trouble you no more, Mr. Griffith. I am very much obliged indeed."

"Hold on, one word, sir," the head clerk requested, just as the detective was going out; "you have asked me a great many questions, all of which I have tried to answer. May I inquire who you are, and what interest you take in this matter?"

"Personally," the detective answered, "I have no interest in the matter. I am acting for another person, as I do not mind telling you. That person desired to learn what became of Henry Abington and Celeste Whitford, and their children."

Mr. Griffith looked as though he wanted to question further, but he did not do so, and with a few remarks of a more commonplace nature the two men parted.

Mr. Griffith turned back, as the detective started away, motioned one of the under-clerks to him, and quickly said:

"You saw that man who just went out. Follow him carefully, do not let him suspect you, and learn where he goes to; also learn who he is if you can."

"Yes, sir."

So the clerk responded, and catching up his hat he darted out of the office and followed his man.

It was his first work in the detective line, and as Kinworth had no suspicion of anything of the kind the young man had no trouble in keeping him in sight.

Kinworth went direct to his hotel, and soon to his room there, and the young man from the bank had no difficulty in learning what the hotel register had to say about him.

In the register the detective had entered his true name and address, and the head clerk of Blackwall, Parmilye & Co.'s establishment was soon in the possession of the items.

Kinworth, on going to his room, sat down and ran the case over in mind.

"My ideas about the affair," he mused, "have proved correct in the main. I have been in luck, too. Now I will telegraph for Mrs. Milburn to come on here, as we arranged. When she is here her memory may, in a greater degree, return to her, when she is brought in contact with once familiar scenes."

"Well, what have I learned? How does the case stand now? Let me sum up the points briefly, and get hold of them. In the first place, Whitford was Mrs. Milburn's maiden name. Reuben Whitford was her father. She married Henry Abington, who was a clerk in her father's bank. They had two children. The eldest was a boy, and I infer that the other was a girl."

"So much for the facts. Now what about theories? It is a peculiar coincidence that Mr. Blackwall's name is Mancred. I want to see him when he gets home. It may signify nothing, however. But what am I to think about that man Griffith? I am inclined to think that he knows more than he has told me. I did not have this suspicion till toward the last of our interview. Then it seemed to grow upon me. I must give more attention to him."

"Well, the case must rest easy now until Mrs. Milburn's arrival. I will get the date of marriage of Henry Abington and Celeste Whitford, and the dates of birth of their children, if the city has them on record. I will hunt up some of Mr. Whitford's old neighbors, and perhaps may find some of his personal friends, and may learn something in that way. Once let me get on the trail of that man Abington, and I think I shall soon be able to clear up the mystery of Mrs. Milburn's past."

Little did he dream of what was before him.

CHAPTER IX.

DORINDA SNIPES AND PERICLES WOGGS.

"GOOD-MORNING to you, Missus Snipes."

"Good-morning to you, Mister Woggs."

"I hope that you are well this morning, Missus Snipes. You certainly look well. You are as fresh and rosy as a girl of fifty, upon my word you are."

"I am quite well, I thank you, Mister Woggs, and I hope that you are the same yourself. But I can see that you are. You are as cheery as a schoolboy."

"Thank you, Missus Snipes. Yes, I am quite well, I thank you."

Pericles Woggs, the first person above quoted, was a man about eighty years of age. He was a curbstome merchant by occupation. His stand was on a corner, and he enjoyed a fair patronage and an income that was sufficient for his humble needs. In fact he was able to lay by a little now and then in anticipation of the proverbial rainy day. He dealt in tobacco and cigars, notions, Jew's-harps and harmonicas.

Dorinda Snipes was in the same occupation, but with a different line of goods for sale. She dealt in apples, oranges, bananas, candy, peanuts, etc. Her stand was on another corner, diagonally opposite to the one occupied by Mr. Woggs. She was about seventy-five years of age. Like Mr. Woggs, she was doing a fairly good business, and was able to save a little as she went along, in foresight against old age, which, in the natural order of things, must sooner or later overtake her.

Mr. Woggs was a little man, now very much dried up and wrinkled. He could not boast of a single tooth in his head, but he wore a wig and a pair of old-fashioned spectacles. He was very attentive to business, and was very fond of his daily newspaper, which he usually read through and through from beginning to end.

Mrs. Snipes was short and fat, and almost as ruddy as some of her finest apples. She carried her age well, and no one would have called her over sixty-five if asked to guess it. She was fond of knitting, and added a little to her income in that way.

These two old persons were quite fond of each other. They had been on their respective corners for a number of years, had the field all to themselves, and were happy, as their different lines of goods afforded no ground for a spirit of rivalry.

To be strictly truthful, they were a little more than fond of each other. It may safely be said that they loved each other. Such was, in fact, the case. Mr. Woggs had long since asked Mrs. Snipes to become the sharer of his joys and— But, he had no sorrows. Had asked her, in

short, to marry him, conditionally. Conditionally Mrs. Snipes was willing to do so, but not otherwise.

As neither was just willing to comply with the conditions, they were still drifting along in single blessedness, but both willing to marry as soon as an agreement satisfactory to both could be reached.

Mrs. Snipes had a big cat, now about as old as herself, in proportion, of which she was very fond. In asking her to marry him, Mr. Woggs had expressly stated that in doing so she must part with the cat. He hated cats with a hatred intense.

While Mrs. Snipes expressed herself as perfectly willing to marry Mr. Woggs, conditionally, she avowed that she could not think of parting with "McAllester"—that was the cat's name. Her condition was that Mr. Woggs should give up smoking.

Mr. Woggs, by the way, was a constant smoker, and his little pipe was about as strong as years of constant smoking could make it.

The little old man could not think of parting with his little old pipe, and just upon these points the proceedings hitched, and still remained at a standstill.

But, enough said.

It was on the morning of the second day after the death of Mr. Sigbert Parmilye, and these two old persons had just opened their stands. The banking house of Blackwall, Parmilye & Co., by the way, was on a corner opposite to both the stands, on the right from Mr. Woggs's, and on the left from Mrs. Snipes's.

The windows and doors of the bank were now draped with mourning, and as the hour was quite early it was not yet open.

Mr. Blackwall had answered the telegram sent to him at New Orleans, directing Mr. Griffit to attend to the draping, and stating that he would start for home at once.

Of course he would not arrive in time for the funeral.

When he had opened his stand, and had made everything ready for the day's business, Mr. Woggs had stepped over to see Mrs. Snipes, greeting her in the words with which this chapter opens, and the quoted dialogue followed.

"I see they have finished puttin' up the mournin' for Mr. Parmilye," Mrs. Snipes observed, continuing the conversation.

"Yes, so I see," responded Woggs. "Poor Parmilye! he is gone, and right in the prime of life, too, as we may say, Missus Snipes. I don't think he was over sixty-five, was he?"

"Was he as old as that, Mister Woggs?"

It was always "Missus" and "Mister" with them, full and rounded and never varying.

Well, yes, I think he was that old; but, then, that is just getting well out of boyhood. Truly all flesh is grass, Missus Snipes, and we can't tell whose turn it will be to go next."

"You are right, when you say that, Mister Woggs."

"And all the more reason why we should make use of the time while it is ours, Missus Snipes, and get all the happiness out of life that we can. I suppose you are set on keepin' that tom-cat forever, though, in spite of all."

"I cannot think of parting with McAllester, Mister Woggs; you ought to know that by this time. I suppose you are still bent upon sticking to that stinking old pipe, on your part, as long as you have breath to draw on it?"

"Missus Snipes, if you take away my pipe and bakky, you may as well take away my bread and butter; one is as necessary to me as the other."

"Well, well, we may as well never mention the subject again."

"Alas! no, I suppose not, Missus Snipes, for I could never consent to have a tom-cat in the house."

"Nor could I abear the smell of that old pipe."

"Alas, alas!"

"I suppose Mr. Parmilye will have a grand funeral, Mister Woggs."

"Oh! undoubtedly, undoubtedly. He must have been very rich, I should think, for this banking business is a business of money, you know. I hear said that Mr. Blackwall is away from home, and can't get here for the funeral. I know I haven't seen him around for a week or more."

"Yes, he is away, and between you and me and the lamp-post, Mister Woggs, it would not be any great loss to the city if he staid away, too. The janitor told me he had gone to New Orleans."

"I have heard you give out hints like that a good many times, Missus Snipes, in the years I have known you here; what do you mean?"

"Never do you mind what I mean, Mister Woggs," with a wink of the eye and a very knowing nod of the head, "never do you mind what I mean. I mean just that, though, that it wouldn't be any great loss to the city if he did not come back at all."

"Well, well, you have your reasons for saying so, of course, but I have always looked upon Mr. Blackwall as a very nice kind of gentleman."

"Yes, yes, he is nice enough; I ain't findin' any fault with him that way; but he wasn't

allus as nice as he is now, Mister Woggs, not by any means he wa'n't."

"So you have hinted before, Missus Snipes—so you have hinted before."

"And a wink is as good as a nod from me, Mister Woggs; every bit as good as a nod, sir, a wink is, from me. This is a wink, sir," exemplifying, "and this is a nod; and you can't say that the wink isn't just as good as the nod, now can you?"

"Well, no, Missus Snipes, I cannot say that I can," Woggs admitted.

"That proves that it is so, then," Mrs. Snipes asserted. "Now, I would not mind tellin' you what I know about Blackwall, Mister Woggs, but it is said that a woman can't keep a secret, an' I know that she can. For that reason I am sure you will excuse me if I say again—Never do you mind what I mean, Mister Woggs," with another of her winks and nods.

"You are a smart woman, Missus Snipes, that's what you are," declared Woggs, as he looked upon her with admiration, "and that's what I have allus said of you. You are as smart as they make 'em, to be plain with you. If it wasn't for that tom-cat—"

"And that stinkin' pipe," Mrs. Snipes hastened to interrupt.

"Well, well, no more of that. I suppose Mr. Blackwall will go it alone in the business now, Missus Snipes."

"How can he, when there is 'company' on the sign?" demanded Mrs. Snipes.

"That's so—how can he? I wonder who the 'company' is?"

"You ask me too much, Mister Woggs. A bank is a place where so many folks is going in and out all the time that one can't tell who is who. Poor Parmilye wasn't there often, and I guess the 'company' has been there a good deal less."

"You may be right, Missus Snipes."

"If they was all as reg'lar in their comin's and goin's as that little Mr. Griffit is— And there he comes now! If they was all as reg'lar as him, I say, we could keep track of 'em easy—eh?"

It was Griffit's hour, and he was on hand to open the bank for the business of the day.

"Right you are, Missus Snipes; right as a trivet."

"If you only knowed what that little Griffit knows, Mister Woggs, then you would know what I know," Mrs. Snipes chatted. "And maybe you would know a good deal more, too," she added, with another wink, accompanied with a nod.

"About Mr. Blackwall, do you mean?"

"About nobody else, Mister Woggs. If you knowed what Griffit knows, you would know what I know; and may be a good deal more."

"You seem to talk as though Parmilye was the best man of the two, when he was livin'," Woggs observed.

"I wouldn't be surprised if he was, Mister Woggs," was the response; "I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he was. But, where is your paper this mornin'? What is the news to-day?"

"Why, to tell the truth, Missus Snipes, I haven't opened the paper yet," was the answer. "I came right over here to say good-mornin' to you. If I find anything that I think will be of interest to you, I will come over and read it to you."

"I hope you will, Mister Woggs. I like to hear you read the news."

"You might hear me read it every mornin' of your life," declared Woggs, leaning a little nearer, "and it would give me the greatest of pleasure to read it to you. Think how nice it would be to have our two stands combined into one, with nice little cozy places for you and me. Then I could sit and read to you and smoke—"

"Stop right there," Mrs. Snipes ordered. "It was all very nice till you came to the 'smoky' part of it. It is a happiness that we shall never enjoy, Mister Woggs."

"But you are willin'—"

"I allus have been willin', Mister Woggs, but only on condition that you give up that nasty pipe."

"Well, just s'posin' I could give up the pipe, just s'posin' I could, you understand; would you kick out that hateful tom-cat?"

"Kick McAllester out! No, sir."

"Then alas, alas! the dream of happiness can never be realized!" and fetching a heavy sigh Mr. Woggs turned mournfully away and went back to his old corner.

CHAPTER X.

UNDER THE SCALPEL.

As has been said, Mr. Blackwall could not get home from New Orleans in time to attend the funeral of his partner.

Mr. Griffit had telegraphed to him promptly, and the banker had replied, expressing his regrets and directing the head clerk what to do, saying that he would start for home immediately.

On the third day after his death, Mr. Parmilye's funeral took place. During the forenoon of that day the body was lying in its handsome

coffin in the parlor of his late residence, and many bankers and merchants dropped in to take a last look at the remains.

Among others who called were special agents representing various insurance companies. It was their business to learn that Mr. Parmilye was really dead, as a matter of form, and they all went away satisfied.

In the afternoon a funeral sermon was preached in one of the neighboring churches, and after the preaching the coffin was opened to the public gaze.

The funeral was quite largely attended, but it was noticed that the family in attendance was small, and that the mourners were few. There were only three or four besides Miss Parmilye and the housekeeper. No one was curious to learn who they were.

One person who was there was Detective Kinworth.

With little on hand to do, pending the arrival of Mrs. Milburn, whom he had telegraphed for and who had answered that she would start immediately, he was passing the time in various ways.

Learning through the press when the funeral was to take place, and having a desire to see the face of the dead man, now that he was in a measure interested in the Blackwall, Parmilye & Co. establishment, the hour of the funeral found him at the church.

When the coffin was opened to the public, he fell in line and passed around to where it rested.

He saw an older and greatly different looking man from what he had expected to see. He had pictured in mind a man about fifty or fifty-five years old, with close-cut hair and neatly-trimmed whiskers. On the contrary, he beheld a man whom he judged to have been at least sixty-five. He had but a brief view, of course, but he got an accurate mental photograph of the dead man's features.

He saw, as said, a man who appeared to have been not less than sixty-five years of age. A wig of rather long sandy-brown hair was on his head; there was a big mole on the right cheek; his jaws were tight closed, and his cheeks were somewhat sunken.

What the detective noted most particularly, however, was that the corpse *had on spectacles!*

He passed on, after a momentary stop, and that peculiar feature—the spectacles—hummed in his mind like a buzzing interrogation. Why spectacles on a corpse? It was something he had never heard of before, though it might be all right for what he knew to the contrary.

He went on and out, and seeing the undertaker's assistant near the hearse, stepped to him and said:

"I would like to ask you a civil question, my friend."

"Go right ahead with it," the assistant returned.

"I am something of a stranger here, and dropped in at this funeral out of curiosity as much as anything. I noticed that the corpse has been supplied with spectacles. Is that the proper thing in New York?"

The undertaker's assistant smiled.

"You have asked me the same question that I asked the undertaker," he answered. "I had never seen it before. It seems that it is not unusual, though, where the deceased has always worn spec's. It goes to maintain the life-like expression, you see."

"Thank you," said Kinworth, and he went away.

That explanation made it seem all right; still the detective could not help feeling that spectacles on a corpse were a little out of place.

When the service at the church was concluded, and the coffin finally closed, the little procession moved away to the ferry, and when the evening sun sunk to rest, as it is figuratively said to do, the body of Sigbert Parmilye reposed in Greenwood.

At about that same hour, the hour of sunset, a small, neat-looking yacht was pushed out from one of the up-town piers on the North River, its sail was spread to the breeze, and it moved gracefully down toward the bay.

There were three or four men on board, one of whom was none other than Dr. Gonda Gonsalvo.

He seemed to be in charge of the yacht, though another person was sailing it.

Very little conversation was had among them, and that only of an ordinary sort upon ordinary topics, and the little craft headed for the Narrows.

As it grew dark the signal-lights were lighted and put into position, and the yacht sped on, skillfully handled, and by the time the Narrows was reached it was quite dark.

The yacht was turned, then, and headed toward the eastern shore, and finally it ran in under the bluff a little north of Bay Ridge, the sail was run down, and it came to an anchor.

A little skiff had been in tow, and that was now brought into use and all the men but one went ashore.

When the shore was made, Dr. Gonsalvo and one man climbed up the bank, leaving the other man to take care of the skiff until their return.

Making their way through the undergrowth as best they could, the doctor and his companion presently struck into a path, and finally came out upon the road.

There they stopped and listened.

"Nothing to be heard," the doctor observed.

"Nothin' that we want ter hear," was the response from the man with him.

They listened again, and then the doctor took a whistle from his pocket, and blew two short, quick notes.

Again they listened.

In a moment an answer was heard, being a signal in the same manner, and a little later a vehicle was heard approaching.

"They are coming," observed the doctor. "They have not failed me. Now for the perilous part of our undertaking."

The vehicle, which proved to be a closed carriage, drew up and stopped; the signal was given again, this time in a low whistle; it was answered by the doctor, and he and his companion came forth and got into the carriage, which immediately started off.

There was a man already inside, and as the carriage moved off the doctor addressed him.

"Is it all right?" he asked.

"Yes, it is all right," was the answer; "or it will be when we get there."

"Good. There must be no failure in this case, you know."

"That has been understood."

The carriage was rolling away in the direction of Brooklyn.

After a long drive it stopped at last, and the doctor opened the door and the three got out.

They were in a lonesome place in the rear of Greenwood Cemetery.

The man who had come with the carriage led the way now, the carriage moving away empty, and soon the three were inside the cemetery, having gained entrance by a secret course.

They had a long walk then, but finally came to the place of their destination, where the momentary light of a match revealed a new-made grave.

"You are sure this is the spot?" the dark-faced doctor questioned.

"There is no doubt on that score," was the assurance of the man who had led the way through the maze. "You stay here, now, and I will soon have the tools."

He went off, returning in about fifteen minutes with two spades, and he and the other man threw off their coats and began to dig into the grave.

In silence and in darkness they worked, the doctor standing some distance away on guard.

It was a hard task, and it took time; but at last it was accomplished, and the top of the box at the bottom of the grave was laid bare.

The men rested, then, before proceeding further.

Presently they set to work again, took off the lid of the box, opened the coffin, passed a rope under the arms of the corpse, and soon after that the body of Sigbert Parmilye was lying out upon the surface of the ground.

The work of filling up the grave occupied less time than had been consumed in digging it out, but that too was no easy task, and by the time it was all done and the men were ready to move away with their prize, nearly two hours had been spent.

After a final look, with the aid of matches, to see that things were being left in proper shape the guide took the spades to the place where he had found them, and when he returned they wrapped their prize in a dark sack and carried it away.

Back the way they had come they went, finally coming out upon the road at the place where they had left it, and there in the shadow of some bushes they waited.

Their wait was a long one. In order not to draw attention to itself, the carriage had had to keep on the move, and having been there once since leaving its passengers it could not come again immediately.

In about half an hour it came along, the driver signaled, and the signal this time being answered, he drew into the bushes and the men and their ghastly prize were quickly taken in.

No time was lost in getting back to the neighborhood of Bay Ridge and to the point where the skiff had been left.

There the corpse was taken out of the carriage, carried to the skiff and taken aboard the yacht, and the carriage, no longer needed, turned and went back the way it had come, its occupant carrying with him a neat sum of money for his part in the nefarious work.

A little time later the yacht presented its sail to the breeze and buffeted its way out into the bay.

When out into the bay it headed a little north of the Robbins Reef light, and passing that point, continued on toward the New Jersey shore.

Finally it ran in at a point between Communipaw and Greenville, the sail was run down and the anchor dropped, and there the body of the banker was put into the skiff again and taken ashore.

Not far distant was a deserted house, a little, dilapidated affair, and to it the body was

carried by the men of the yacht, the dark-visaged doctor following them, carrying a valise.

When the corpse was placed in the house the doctor paid the men and dismissed them, and the yacht was soon on its way back to the city.

It may be remarked, *en passant*, that the men with whom he had dealt had no knowledge of who Dr. Gonsalvo really was, though this was clearly not the first time he had had dealings with them.

Nor was it the first time he had visited this old house. His acquaintance with its interior proved that. He went around, saw that the windows were securely shut and boarded, and then lighted a lamp. By the light a startling scene was revealed. On a rude table that had every appearance of having been used before as a dissecting slab, lay the doctor's ghastly prize.

Dr. Gonsalvo removed his hat and coat, rolled up his sleeves, opened the valise he had brought and took out a scalpel.

"Ten thousand dollars," he chuckled, a devilish smile lighting up his handsome face as he stood and looked upon his prize with scalpel in hand; "ten thousand dollars, and a chance to study the effects of the drug. I am in luck. It will be a rich joke, though, if it has worked contrary to my expectations; ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

ON the afternoon of the funeral the bank was closed, notice to that effect having been posted.

Griffit and others of the employees attended the funeral.

Mr. Blackwall's family attended, too, and in their carriage accompanied the mourners to the cemetery.

On the return to the city Mrs. Blackwall invited Essylt Parmilye to go home with her. Essylt declined on account of Mrs. Swann, whom, as has been said, she regarded with much affection. The invitation was thereupon extended to her also, and it was finally accepted.

Mr. Blackwall's family consisted of his wife, a son and a daughter.

Mrs. Blackwall was about forty-five years of age. She was a native of New Orleans, and was of French descent. First married at the age of sixteen, she was a widow at eighteen. Her husband having left her quite rich, and she being pretty, she was, at the age of twenty, one of the belles of the city. It was about that time that Mancred Blackwall met her, and in a little while he had won her hand in marriage.

Blackwall was not rich at that time, but he was blessed with good looks and a vast amount of assurance, and those points carried him into the young widow's affections. After their marriage they came to New York, where Blackwall, with his wife's money, entered into the banking business in partnership with his friend Parmilye, whom he had known for years—as he said. Their venture was successful from the start, and their bank was now looked upon as one of the solid institutions of the city.

Mrs. Blackwall still retained much of her former comeliness. She was of average height, well formed, and did not look to be a day over forty. She was a pronounced brunette, had flashing black eyes, and her black hair was only just beginning to show threads of silver here and there.

The son, Waldemar, was about twenty-four years old. He was good-looking and was solidly built. He greatly resembled his father, and was almost the counterpart of what his father had been at his age. But he had no inclination for business, was a little dissolute in habits, and chose company in which his taste and ideas found a fellow feeling.

Giuletta, the daughter, much resembled her mother, and possessed all of her mother's maiden beauty. Her age was twenty-two. She was a brunette, but not of so pronounced a type as her mother. She was not delicate, but was small and slenderly formed, and did not look to be over strong. She was tender-hearted and sincere in everything, and in these respects was entirely unlike her brother.

Their home was in an aristocratic part of the city, and was a handsome residence of brown stone, sumptuously furnished.

Miss Parmilye had visited there quite a number of times, and she and Giuletta were good friends. Mr. Parmilye had never been there but once, and on that occasion he went with Essylt, wanting to see Mr. Blackwall, but did not find him at home. Mr. Parmilye's home was much plainer than Mr. Blackwall's, and it was surmised that he did not feel at ease in the house of his partner, which accounted for his disinclination to visit him.

Be that as it might, the fact remained that he had never been there but the once. Mr. Parmilye was peculiar, though, so nothing was thought of it. Then, too, he was away from the city more than half his time, and his peculiarity in absenting himself from his own home has been mentioned.

If it was true that Mr. Parmilye had been overawed by the splendor of his partner's home, the same was not true of Essylt. Everything was far more grand than in her own home, she knew, but nothing in her manner betrayed the fact that she noticed it. Educated abroad and

having traveled extensively, she had moved in the best society of the leading cities, and if there was any room for question on the point, she was more fitted for the station of mistress of a palace than either of the Blackwalls—mother or daughter.

Miss Parmilye and Mrs. Swann accompanied Mrs. Blackwall home, and after a little rest they had a quiet tea in the sitting-room.

Only the four—Mrs. Blackwall, her daughter, Miss Parmilye and Mrs. Swann were present.

"I suppose it is too soon to ask you what your intentions are with regard to the future, Miss Parmilye?" Mrs. Blackwall observed at the table.

"Yes, for I have hardly been able to think about it yet," was the reply. "It will very much depend on what means I find at my command, of course."

"Certainly; but you have no apprehensions that your fortune will be small, I trust?"

"On the contrary, I fear that it will be small."

"Indeed! you quite surprise me. I thought your father was very rich. What reason have you for thinking as you do, if I may ask?"

"Papa told me so himself on the night he died."

"Is it possible! Well, you can rest assured that you have friends, anyhow, if it turns out as you fear. I once heard Mr. Blackwall say that Mr. Parmilye had requested him to take you into our home, if anything should happen to him. I had no idea that his fortune was small, however. You will pardon me for speaking thus, I hope, my dear child."

"Oh! to be sure. Yes, papa mentioned it to me. When Mr. Blackwall returns we shall learn all about it, no doubt."

"Oh! that will be grand!" exclaimed Giuletta, clapping her hands in delight. "How delighted I shall be to have you live here, Essylt!"

"Have you any relatives living?" Mrs. Blackwall asked kindly.

"Not one in all the world that I am aware of, Mrs. Blackwall," Essylt truthfully answered.

"How sad! But, we shall try all the more to make you happy if you do come to our home," promised Mrs. Blackwall.

"Indeed, yes!" exclaimed Giuletta. "You and I will be just like sisters, Essylt!"

Essylt smiled.

"In saying that I have no relatives," she remarked, "I said only what is true; and yet, I must not forget that I have a mother, or at least a very dear friend who has been like a mother to me. Of course I refer to Mrs. Swann."

"So I have certainly tried to be," declared Mrs. Swann.

"And I cannot fancy the thought of parting with her," Essylt added. "While I should enjoy coming here, Mrs. Blackwall, and would very much like to be 'just like sisters' with you, Giuletta, as you say, yet I must tell you plainly that I will not come into your happy home as a dependent. If—"

"Who would for one moment consider you as such?" asked Mrs. Blackwall. "You would be one of us."

"I know that, but I should not feel myself so. If I find that my fortune is little or nothing, I think I shall cast my lot with Mrs. Swann. It would be better for me to do so, I am sure."

"Oh, what an idea!" exclaimed Mrs. Blackwall. "What would you two do, I would like to know?"

"What would we do?" repeated Essylt; "why, if it came to it I am sure we could work. But, it will not be quite so bad as that. Papa has provided something for her, and when our house is sold I shall have something, however little. Oh, we could get along, eh, Mrs. Swann?" in a tone of lightness.

"Indeed, yes," the housekeeper assured.

"I can improve upon that plan," declared Mrs. Blackwall; "you shall both come here. But, we will have no more to say about it for the present. When we know more about the matter we shall be able to talk more intelligently upon it. Will you not take some more tea, Essylt?"

The subject was dropped there, and the conversation took a turn.

After tea they all went to the parlor, and both Mrs. Blackwall and Giuletta did all they could to brighten Essylt's thoughts, and to take them off the great loss she had sustained in the death of her father.

While they were there the front door opened, and the voices of Waldemar Blackwall and some one else were heard in the hall.

"It is Waldemar," observed Giuletta, "and some one is with him."

"Yes, it is he," agreed Mrs. Blackwall; "I do not recognize the voice of his companion."

"Nor I," said Giuletta.

In a few moments the door opened and the banker's son stepped into the room, followed by a person whom Essylt Parmilye, to her astonishment, instantly recognized.

It was the man from whom she had sought protection on the night of her coming from Philadelphia.

Waldemar glanced around, bowed to Essylt, and turning to his mother, said:

"Mother, allow me to present my friend, Mr. Dugald Cambeth, of Philadelphia, whom I have invited home to tea with me. Mr. Cambeth," turning to him, "this is my mother; and this is my sister," indicating Giuletta.

Cambeth bowed low, and Mrs. Blackwall rose, offered her hand, and said:

"My son's friends are welcome here, Mr. Cambeth. Let me make you known to Miss Parmilye and also to Mrs. Swann."

Cambeth turned, ready to bend low as before, but at sight of Essylt he came to an abrupt stop, as though caught by a sudden crick in the back, and his face turned violently red.

Every one noticed it, and all eyes were turned upon Essylt.

Her face showed nothing of recognition, as with an inclination of the head she acknowledged him, and he soon in a measure recovered.

Waldemar and his friend sat down for a few minutes, Mrs. Blackwall engaging the latter in some trivial conversation, and presently her son rose and remarked:

"If you will excuse us now, mother, I will take Mr. Cambeth up to my rooms."

Mrs. Blackwall inclined her head, said "Certainly," and the two left the room and went upstairs.

"Have you ever seen him before, dear?" Mrs. Blackwall immediately asked of Essylt.

"I saw him on the ferry the other night," Essylt answered.

"I thought he had seen you, by the way he colored."

Of course Essylt offered no further explanation, under the circumstances, and the matter was dropped.

When the two men were in Waldemar's rooms above, Waldemar exclaimed:

"Jove! but you looked cut up, when you saw Miss Parmilye; what was it about? Have you met her before?"

"At first glance I thought I recognized her as another person," the man offered in excuse, "but I was mistaken, of course. Why, did I show it?"

"Did you! You looked like a lobster."

CHAPTER XII.

DOCTOR GONSALVO'S MIRACLE.

FOR some minutes Dr. Gonsalvo stood and glared at the body on the rude table before him, his scalpel ready for its duty.

To any one not accustomed to the horrors of the dissecting-chamber, it would have been a terrible sight.

But, it had no horrors for the dark-visaged doctor.

"Ten thousand dollars," he presently chuckled again. "That is quite a neat sum for such a trifling bit of work. Not so trifling, either, but of no great magnitude to me. Ten thousand dollars, and a chance to study the effects of the drug. I am in luck, truly. But, this is not getting at work."

He felt of the edge of the scalpel, and moved the light into a better position, and turned it up brighter.

"I can hardly resist the temptation to explore your vitals, sir," he said to the corpse, "but, that is not according to our agreement. If you were in condition to say anything about it, you would no doubt demand to be brought back to life. Very well, sir, I will see what I can do for you."

Laying aside the scalpel, the doctor took up another knife, and with it cut the grave-clothes from the body.

That done, he took up the scalpel again, adjusted the light to a yet more favorable position, and bent over the dead Parmilye.

He felt of the neck, laid the head over on its right side, ran his finger up and down the side of the throat several times, and then carefully brought the point of the scalpel to the skin.

With steady hand he made a slight incision.

That done, he adjusted a magnifying-glass to his eye, pressed open the cut he had made, and carefully examined it.

"That will do," he reflected, as he laid the glass aside. "I have hit the right spot. I could not do it better if I had a hundred trials."

Putting away the glass, he brought out a syringe of peculiar shape and construction. That he laid down, and produced next a small bowl and some small bottles of differing contents.

What he did then he did with slow carefulness and with steady hands. Into a graduation glass he poured about two ounces of colorless liquid from one of the bottles. To that he added drops from the other bottles; two drops of one thing, four of another, eight of another, and so forth.

When he had done, he stirred the mixture and held it up to the light. It met his approval.

Picking up the syringe, he filled it, and inserting its point into the incision he had made in the neck of the body, discharged its contents therein.

This was repeated three times.

After that the incision was caught together and closed with some very adhesive substance, and it could not be noticed.

Putting away the things he had thus far employed, the doctor brought out next a small but

powerful electric battery. That he adjusted. Raising the head of the dead man, he fastened one of the poles of the battery to the back of his neck by means of a clamp. Then he attached the other pole, in divided sections, to the soles of the feet in the same manner.

When these arrangements had been completed, he carefully let on the current—little by little—stronger and stronger—intensely watching the effect.

The muscles of the corpse were seen to twitch and quiver, and the dark-faced doctor greeted this result with a smile of satisfaction.

Presently he stepped forward and began to slap the dead man smartly upon the breast, making the blows quick and sharp, and in harmony with the time of the normal beating of the human heart.

This was kept up without cessation.

Fifteen minutes passed; the corpse suddenly gave a convulsive movement, uttered a gasp-like groan, and opened its eyes.

With an exclamation of delight the doctor stopped the breast-blows, drew back, and with folded arms calmly surveyed his work.

Sigbert Parmilye was alive!

Other convulsive movements followed the first, other groans were uttered, and some incoherent words spoken, and finally the resuscitated man essayed to sit up.

Dr. Gonsalvo stepped forward to his assistance.

"Mr. Parmilye," he said, "allow me to welcome you back to earth."

The banker looked about him in a terrified manner.

"In the name of evil," he gasped, "where am I?"

"You are on my dissecting-slab, or at any rate on one which I have more than once found it convenient to make use of," the doctor explained. "How do you feel?" he inquired.

"Feel!" exclaimed the resuscitated banker. "I don't feel at all. I haven't a particle of sensation. Am I dead?"

The color was returning to his flesh, his muscles were regaining their power, and he was far from being dead.

"Ha, ha, ha!" the doctor laughed, "you are not as dead as you were a little while ago, of that I can assure you."

"But, why can't I feel?" the banker demanded.

"Because you are not quite alive enough for that yet," was the explanation. "Sit right still for a few minutes, and when you begin to feel a tingling sensation in your body let me know."

"All right, but hurry this thing up as quick as you can. How long have I been in this state?"

"About seventy-eight or eighty hours, I guess."

"So long as that?"

"Yes."

"And where have you been keeping me? How did the funeral work without a dead man in the coffin?"

"It did not work at all without a corpse," was the answer. "I found that the insurance companies were keeping their eyes on you, and I had to let you be buried. It was not safe to do otherwise. If the coffin had been kept closed at the church it would have aroused suspicion, and I did not dare to risk it."

"And I have actually been in the dead vault!" with an exclamation of horror.

"Worse than that," was the smiling answer; "you have been in the grave."

"Good heaven!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" the doctor laughed. "Yes, actually dead and buried. But, what matter," he added, "since you knew nothing about it? You were no worse off there than you would have been in the vault, and I had a better chance of getting you out."

"It is all a horrible dream," the banker gasped. "It cannot be true. What a risk I have run! If I had suspected that, I would never have undertaken it!"

"I knew that, my dear sir, and I lied to you liberally. Of course you will forgive me for that now, since it has come out all right. How do you feel?"

"Why, my arms and legs begin to feel asleep."

"That is right. You are coming around. Sit still for a few minutes longer, and then I will remove this electric battery and assist you to your feet. In the mean time I will prepare something to give you strength."

Making a mixture from several of his bottles, the doctor put it into a tin cup and held it over the lamp to warm, when he gave it to Mr. Parmilye to drink.

The effect was almost magical. The subject's strength returned; he stretched his limbs, and, as soon as the electric appliances were removed, he got off the table and stood upon his feet. The dead was quickened again!

"I begin to feel like myself," he observed. "Where are my clothes? I hope you haven't forgotten them?"

"I have forgotten nothing, sir," was the assurance. "You will find everything you want here in this big valise. I will take my tool-bag and other traps out of it."

Suiting action to his words, the doctor took his things out of the valise, and handed it over.

Mr. Parmilye took it and explored its contents, and in a short time he was dressed and ready for the business of life once more. But he was not himself in appearance. His wig was off, and the clothes were different from any he had been used to wearing.

"How do I look?" he asked.

"Not very beautiful," answered the doctor; "but you are good enough for a dead man. How do you feel by this time?"

"I feel all right, only terribly hungry."

"That is natural. But you must make your first meal a very light one. I will attend to that, however. I will give you a strengthening drink every half-hour until we leave here, and that will brace you right up."

"That is what I need—bracing up. If I have been through all you say I have, it is a wonder that I am not dead in fact. I would not risk it again."

"No, I should think not. But you have afforded me a valuable experiment, in the matter of my bringing you back to life, and you need have no fears of my skill in that respect, though I had much rather try it upon a younger man."

"I shall not require your service again, of that I can assure you now. But, tell me all about the case, and how you worked it."

"I will do so, to pass away the time."

Dr. Gonsalvo went ahead and told the banker all about the experience he had passed through, to which Mr. Parmilye listened attentively, interrupting occasionally with an exclamation.

It sounded more like some bit of high-wrought fiction than a veritable truth, and that one of which he himself had been the subject.

They remained in the old house until daylight, the doctor giving his patient his half-hourly drink regularly, and about sunrise they stole forth and headed toward Greenville.

The doctor had put everything in order in the old house, and leaving it had carefully closed and locked it.

When they arrived at the Greenville Station of the Central Railroad it was almost time for one of the early trains to the city to come along, and in a little while they were rolling into the Communipaw Station.

But they did not cross the river. Instead, they went into the passenger-room and sat down.

"Well," the doctor observed, "after so long a fast you must be famished, and I guess I can now allow you to have a cup of coffee. I will bring it. One hour later you may eat some light food, but not too much. Do not fail to do as I say."

"I will not fail to follow the advice."

A cup of coffee was brought, the banker drank it eagerly, and immediately declared that he was feeling better all the time.

After some further conversation the doctor finally said:

"Well, sir, you are all right, and here I will leave you. I must be at my office on time. Allow me to bid you good-by, sir."

"Good-by, doctor, and good-by forever," the ex-banker responded, giving his hand. "We shall never meet again. If you win my daughter, be kind to her."

"I promise you that I will."

They parted so, and the doctor returned to New York. An hour later the dead Mr. Parmilye, in disguise, was on a train moving away from the mighty metropolis.

CHAPTER XIII.

MANCRED BLACKWALL ALARMED.

ON the evening of the second day after the funeral of Mr. Parmilye, Mr. Blackwall reached home.

He was a little weary with the fatigue of the journey, but was otherwise all right.

He was greatly cut up over the sudden death of his friend and partner.

"To think," he said, "that he died when I was away from home so far. Sigbert and I were always the best of friends, and I regarded him like a brother. He was never very active in the business, to be sure, but I shall miss his wise counsel and clear understanding in matters of importance."

On the morning after his arrival he was at the bank at his usual hour.

When he had been in his office a little time he sent for Griffit, who soon presented himself.

"Griffit," the banker said, "we have met with a sad loss."

"Yes, sir," Griffit passively admitted.

"And a great loss," the banker impressed.

"Yes, sir," in the same manner.

"I cannot begin to tell you, Griffit, how bad I feel over this great and sad loss," Mr. Blackwall further impressed. "And to think that I was so far away from home, too. But, then, it is the lot of all to die, and we must expect the grim visitor."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Griffit, sit down and let's have a talk. I suppose you have a report for me. Have any important transactions been carried forward in my absence? Now that poor Parmilye is no more, your report will have to be all the more exact."

"Not much of anything out of the regular order has been going on, sir, in the line of business," the head clerk answered, "but there is something a little out of the business order which you will no doubt want to hear about."

"Ha! What do you mean? But, let's settle the business matters first, and have the field all clear for other things afterward."

Some conversation took place then relative to the business of the bank, the head clerk giving a report of nearly everything that had been done during the banker's absence.

"That will do," Mr. Blackwall finally said; "I see that things have gone on all right. Parmilye was level-headed in all he did. I could trust him as I would myself. Now about that other matter, Griffit."

"Well, sir, it was on the day after Mr. Parmilye died," the head clerk began. "A young man came in here and asked to see me. I asked him into the office, of course, and you could never guess what his business was."

"Perhaps not, Griffit," answered the banker, showing interest; "what was it?"

"He wanted to find out something about Reuben Whitford and his family, and having learned that I had been employed by Whitford, had come to me for information."

Mr. Blackwall was sitting bolt upright in his chair now, his eyes wide open, and his face the picture of astonishment.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

They were now talking in a very much lower tone than they had previously employed.

"It rather surprises you, eh?"

"That is no name for it," declared the banker. "Who was he, and what did he want to find out?"

"Well, he wanted to know, first, what had become of Mr. Whitford. Then he inquired about his daughter, Celeste, and about Henry Abington."

Blackwall was upon his feet, and pacing the floor.

"This is news with a vengeance," he declared. "But of course you knew nothing, Griffit—you knew nothing."

"On the contrary, sir, I knew a great deal."

"What! What is that you say?"

"I say that I knew a great deal."

"Confound you! what do you mean, anyhow? Out with it, so that I will understand it all."

"Very well, sir. I will tell you everything about it. I said that I knew a great deal, because he got a great deal out of me."

"What did you let him do that for?"

"That is what I want to know. I have been thinking over it since, and I have been wanting for some one to come along and kick me hard. When that young man came in here I believe that he did not know a thing about what he wanted to know, but his questions were put so devilishly cute that he wormed confessions out of me before I knew it. He was a terror."

"Curse you for an idiot!"

"That is all very well, sir, but you would have been in the same fix yourself."

"Do you mean to call me a blockhead?"

"Have you ever had reason to call me one?"

"Well, no, but this business looks mighty weak on your part," and the banker glared at his clerk in a furious manner.

"I could not help it, nor could you have helped it," Griffit declared. "What he got was by his infernal worming, sir. I could not see it then, but I can see it plain enough now. It all comes back to me, and I can see just what he knew and what he did not know. But, I played one move on him that he did not get the best of the game in."

"And what was that?"

"Why, I had him followed when he went away, and I learned who he is and where he is from. He is at the — Hotel."

"Ha! That is something, anyhow. Who is he?"

"His name is Prentiss Kinworth, and he registers as from San Francisco."

"San Francisco!"

"Yes."

"Have you looked in the Directory of that city?"

"No; had not thought of that."

"Do so immediately, then. Go to Bradstreet's, I guess you will find it there, and see what is to be learned of the person."

"Yes, sir."

The head clerk left the office and set out upon his mission.

"What can be in the wind now, I wonder?" Blackwall asked himself, as he paced to and fro across the office. "There is something rotten in Denmark, that is sure. It may be serious and it may not be. I must take steps to find out."

His face wore a troubled look, and it was clear to be seen that he was in no easy state of mind.

Griffit was not gone a great while, and the moment he entered the banker demanded:

"Well?"

"I found the name in the Directory," he announced, "and what I learned is not likely to cause you any uneasiness."

"What did you learn? that is what I want to know!"

"I learned that this Prentiss Kinworth is a member of the detective firm of Howard Kinworth & Co."

Mancred Blackwall sunk down upon his chair, pale and trembling.

"What can be the meaning of this?" he gasped. "But, go on, Griffit, and tell me all. You did not finish your story."

"I will give you the sum and substance of it, or I will give it to you in detail, just as you want it. I remember it well enough, curse him!"

"Let me hear it all."

"Well, I asked him what he wanted to know about Whitford, and he answered that he wanted to know everything I could tell. I could tell nothing, and then he commenced his worming questions. You see I was between two fires, as it were. I wanted to appear to be free to tell him all I could, and yet I did not want to tell anything. He asked, as I have said, about Mr. Whitford, Celeste and Abington. I guess I had better sum it all up and give you just the information he got."

"Well, do that."

"I informed him that Mr. Whitford is dead. That I did not know what became of Celeste. He asked if I remembered her, as she used to come to the bank. I said yes, I remembered her. You will see the course his worming questions took, from the points he got. He knows these things: That Celeste came to the bank after she was married; that Abington was employed at the bank; that they had two children, a boy and a girl; and some minor facts."

"And you say you do not think he knew anything of all this when he came to see you?"

"That is what I think. I have been running it over in my mind, and I have summed it up thus: He had a clew to Mr. Whitford, that he used to have a bank on Wall street, that he had a daughter Celeste, and that she married Henry Abington; and that is all he did know. With these points, he made the impression with every question that he knew it all and a little more, but wanted me to confirm his ideas. Curse him! he could not worm me again!"

"I am not so sure of that," remarked the banker, thoughtfully. "I have heard of these Kinworths, and I tell you the truth in saying that I would rather have the Pinkertons after me, if I happened to be guilty of anything."

"As bad as that?"

"That is the reputation they hold on the Pacific Slope. I am glad that you got the information you did. Forewarned is forearmed, you know. But, see here, I have always given you credit for sound sense and good judgment, and of course you did not let him get away from you without pumping him in turn, did you?"

"I pumped, or tried to, but the water didn't come to any great extent," was the answer. "But let me tell you something more before I come to that. While he was here Miss Parmilye came in to draw some money—and, by the way, I let her have five hundred on my own account; and she and the young man recognized each other."

"The deuce you say!"

"Just as I tell you. It seems they had met on the train or boat, on the previous night, and he had rendered her some sort of service. At any rate so she told Doctor Gonsalvo, who also came in while he was here."

"Worse and worse!"

"When he was about to go, then I went for information out of him. Who are you? I asked, and why are you after all this information? Personally, he said, he had no interest in the matter, but he was working in the interest of another person who desired to learn what had become of Henry and Celeste Abington and their children."

"Anything more? Couldn't the human bloodhound think of something more to ask about?"

"Yes, he asked more, too," Griffit declared. "He asked one other question that threw me off my feet, and I do not understand it yet. He asked me completely. I felt like a fool; but, it was natural enough, too, at first blush."

"Well, what was it? Let me hear the worst and all of it, and then we will see what action our side will take in the game."

CHAPTER XIV.

FOREWARNED, FOREARMED.

WHATEVER Mr. Blackwall's secret might be, it was clear that he was alarmed.

There was a look of determination upon his face and a gleam in his eyes that boded no good for the detective.

As for Griffit, he was more talkative than usual, and showed interest in the subject of their conversation.

Both men were seated now, Mr. Blackwall in his office-chair at the side of the table, and Griffit in another chair at the corner. Their heads came close together as they grew more and more in earnest.

"Just as the man was going out," Griffit went on with his narration, "he stopped suddenly and asked, 'Where is Mancred?' He put the question in the most matter-of-fact way that you can imagine, and he caught me. My mind in-

stantly turned to you, that being your first name. The thought came that he must know you. 'He is in New Orleans,' I answered; and then I caught myself and asked him if he referred to you."

"And what did he say to that?"

"He asked if that were your name. Of course I had to say it is. Again I asked if he meant you. 'No,' he answered; 'I was under the impression that there used to be a Mancred employed by Mr. Whitford. Do you remember the name?' 'No,' I answered, 'I do not.'"

"And you say that you do not understand it yet, eh?" queried Mr. Blackwall.

"No, I do not understand it yet. You know as well as I do that there was no one of that name in Mr. Whitford's employ."

"How should I know anything about it," the banker demanded, "when I did not come here until after his death, when his business was all wound up and closed?"

"Well, take my word for it then. There was no one of that name in that bank. It is next to impossible that this man could mean you—and in fact he owned that he did not. What then? As I have told you, I felt flat. Dast him! he wound me up as easily as a ball of yarn."

"Well, as you have said, you could not help it. If he is one of the Kinworths it is a wonder that he did not wind you up worse. But, you did not let him get away scot free altogether, and there is some satisfaction in that. I will take care of him. I hope he will come and let me have an interview with him."

"I hope he will," Griffit echoed.

"You think he would get the better of it, eh?" "I do not say that, but you will be able to appreciate what I have told you of my experience with him. I would not mind seeing him again myself, for I would be prepared for him; but, curse him! he has got all he wanted out of me already."

"Undoubtedly."

"But, do you understand what he was after by inquiring about one Mancred, when he did not mean you?"

"I think I understand it," Mr. Blackwall answered. "Yes, I can safely say that I do understand it. He shall find his man Mancred, too. But, enough of this now, Griffit. What you do not know need not worry you. You know enough as it is. We will let our conversation come to an end now."

"Yes, sir."

In a moment Griffit became the humble head clerk again, and had little to say beyond his monosyllabic "Yes, sir."

He soon left the office, and Mr. Blackwall settled down in his chair to think.

"Twenty-seven years ago," his thoughts ran, "that fool Abington began his run of evil, and for twenty-seven years he has prospered. I call him a fool because he has been a fool. And now I must stand and defend what he has laid up in the way of evil, or fall in the crash this accursed detective will bring down upon me."

His face grew dark and clouded.

"He shall die!" he presently hissed between his teeth. "I will not have the mask torn away at this late day. Abington, *alias* Parmilye, is out of the way for all time, and I thought my skirts were clear of the whole business, but it seems not. Curse him! I know well enough where the name Mancred was used. It was at the asylum in San Francisco. There is but one conclusion to draw, and that is that that woman is still alive, and is in her right mind. She is now looking up the past. But, where does she get her means?"

No longer could he sit still. His mind was in a whirl, and he rose and began to pace the floor.

"What can be at the bottom of it all?" he demanded of his own thoughts. "Who has set the ball rolling, and given her the clews? Parmilye never learned what became of her, because he dared not ask. He rested with the conviction that she must be dead. But dead she is not. No other person would have any interest in the past of Henry Abington and Celeste Whitford, and the fate of their children."

To and fro in silence he paced for some time.

"I must see Doctor Gonsalvo!" he finally exclaimed. "If there is any one who can help me clear up this disagreeable mess, it is he."

With clinched fists he brushed an imaginary presence away from before him, his face lighted up, and he sat down at his desk and dived into business.

That night found him at the residence of the dark-visaged doctor.

The colored man-servant opened the door to him, he inquired for the doctor, was shown into the parlor, and in a little time the doctor joined him.

"Ah! Mr. Blackwall," he exclaimed, "glad to see you! When did you return home?"

"Last night," Mr. Blackwall explained, as he shook hands with the doctor. "A sad thing about Parmilye, isn't it," he added.

"It is indeed," the doctor agreed.

Something like a smile suggested itself on both men's faces.

"I have called to have a private interview with you," Mr. Blackwall announced, presently.

"I have some disclosures to make to you, and require your help in a work I have taken in hand."

"Very well, sir, I am at your service. We will go right into the rear room here."

The doctor led the way, and they were soon closeted in the rear room with the two skeletons and the several skulls.

"Now you may talk freely, sir," the doctor observed, as both took seats.

"That is what I want to do," declared Mr. Blackwall, "and that is what I must do. Pay attention to me."

"I am all attention, sir."

"Very good. From my clerk Griffit I have been able to learn about everything that has taken place during my absence, so far as he has any knowledge of events."

"Of course, sir."

"Let your mind go back to the day after Mr. Parmilye's death. His daughter went to the bank to get money. You followed her with the intention of rendering her some financial assistance, if she would accept it. She had just got money from Griffit, and so you were too late."

"Yes, sir, that is all straight and true," the doctor owned.

"Well, do you remember a man who was in the office at that time?"

"I remember him perfectly well, sir. Miss Parmilye gave us a passing introduction. It seems he had rendered her some sort of service on the previous night. He said his name was Kinworth."

"Exactly so. That is all you know about him, eh?"

"That is all, sir."

"Then I can tell you something more. His full name is Prentiss Kinworth, and he is a member of the Kinworth Detective Agency of San Francisco."

The dark-visaged doctor's face took on a dirty-pale hue for a moment, and he gasped:

"A detective?"

"Yes, sir, a detective," the banker assured; "and I am free to tell you as I said to Griffit, that I would rather have the Pinkertons after me, were I guilty of any crime, than that Pacific Slope lynx."

"Ha, ha, ha!" the doctor laughed, "that is a good one, I must declare. If you 'were guilty of any crime.' Ha, ha, ha!"

"Would you insinuate that I *am* guilty of anything?"

"Oh, no, sir; not for the world! Our little scheme, with Parmilye to help us, to swindle insurance companies out of close on to a hundred thousand dollars is a mere nothing."

"*Sh!* Do not breathe those words again! If they were overheard, ruin would be hurled upon us in no time."

"Right you are; but, they will not be overheard. No fear to speak here, sir, in the tones we are employing now. But, what about the case? What does the detective want?"

"If he gets what he wants, Gonsalvo, it will force us to the wall with nothing to defend ourselves with. He is hot on the trail of Parmilye."

"The deuce he is!"

"Yes, he is. You remember I told you something of Parmilye's past, do you not, doctor?"

"Perfectly well, sir."

"Well, the ghosts of twenty-seven years ago are coming up. This detective had been employed by some one to learn all about Henry Abington and his wife, and to find out what became of their children."

"Is he likely to learn anything? Parmilye is now dead, and it is not very probable that any one else will tell him anything."

"I fear that he has already learned too much," the banker responded. "He got hold of Griffit, and, as he expresses it, wormed him: that is to say, he drew out of him about everything of importance that he was able to tell. Once let him get on the track of Parmilye, and it will be warm work for us."

The doctor smiled.

"Do not let such a trifle worry you," he said. "I am not into this game on the losing side, you can set that down as a fact. We will keep our eyes on Mr. Detective, and if he goes to smelling around too near, we— Well, it won't be healthy for him, that is all."

"It is unsafe to have him around at all," maintained the banker. "Let him get an inkling of this insurance scheme, and it will be all up with us."

"Don't let him get the inkling, that is the best advice that I can give you."

"But hadn't we better take steps to get him out of the city as soon as we can?"

"How would you go to work to do that?"

"Put him on a false scent, for instance."

"It might be done, but I don't see how just clearly. By the way, where is he stopping? It might be well for me to have a chance meeting with him, and follow up the introduction I have had."

"He is at the ——— Hotel."

"Very good. I think I will drop around that way to-night. Be assured of one thing, Mr. Blackwall, and that is this: While I have in a measure made light of this, I am in deadly earnest, and if I find that there is danger of exposure, this detective shall die!"

As he said this the doctor leaned over toward his companion, and his face took on an expression that was truly demoniacal.

CHAPTER XV.

KINWORTH FORMS ACQUAINTANCES.

It was about half-past nine, and Detective Kinworth was seated in the smoking-room of the hotel.

The case, so far, for him, had been one of the mildest sort.

But he had not looked for anything else. What was there in it to give it the element of excitement? Surely nothing, so far as he could see.

That he had had no thought of danger has been plainly shown in the fact that on coming to the hotel he had registered his true name and address. Had the case been looked upon as a dangerous one, he would never have done that.

He had looked upon it as a plain affair, though it might prove to be rather difficult. But now, with the success he had already met with, he looked forward to plain sailing as soon as Mrs. Milburn should arrive.

He had not been idle. He had looked up persons who had known Mr. Whitford and his daughter, and his conclusions in regard to the matter had been confirmed. He had proven the truth of what he had learned from Griffit. From some parties he had learned where Mr. and Mrs. Abington had lived during their time in New York. He had been to the place, and was anxious now to take Mrs. Milburn there when she should arrive.

He had learned something of their married life. It was true that they had had two children, one a boy and the other a girl. About a year after the death of Mr. Whitford the family went away, and no one could tell anything further about them. There had been living with them a middle-aged woman. Her name could not be ascertained, nor anything about her.

Two persons he could not get out of his mind, and those were Griffit, the head clerk in the Blackwell, Parmilye & Co. establishment, and the head partner in the firm, Mr. Blackwall. He felt that Griffit knew more than he had told, and the fact that Mr. Blackwall's name was Mancered made him interested in him.

He was seated in the smoking-room, as stated, paying but idle attention to those around him, when the entrance of a certain person caused him to brighten up and be more observant.

The person who had come in was Dr. Gonsalvo.

He walked idly and leisurely down the room, spoke to one or two men as he passed them, and continued on to the adjoining room and to the bar.

He paused there, ordered a fancy drink, and as he sipped it he looked around in a leisurely manner at those present.

Kinworth could see him from where he sat. He was seated in a direct line with the bar through the arcade.

Presently the doctor looked in his direction, their eyes met, and the doctor gave a smile and nod of recognition.

Kinworth responded, and the doctor dashed off the little that remained in his glass and passed out to where the detective sat.

"We meet again, it seems," he observed.

"Yes, so we do," the detective responded, and he moved his chair a little to offer an invitation to the doctor to occupy one that was near him.

The doctor sat down.

"I fancy there is no reason why we should not become better acquainted," the doctor remarked, "since we are introduced by so fair a lady. Will you allow me to thank you for the service you rendered to Miss Parmilye the other night?"

"It does not deserve any especial thanks that I know of," answered the detective, "but if there is any reason why you feel called upon to thank me, why go ahead."

"There is such a reason. I hold Miss Parmilye as good as affianced to me. I learned from her the nature of the service you rendered her, and you have my hearty and well-meant thanks."

"Say no more about it," said the detective.

"By the way, will you not step up and take something at my expense?" the doctor invited.

"I thank you, but I never drink," Kinworth excused himself.

"Well, here, then, take a cigar; I see you smoke, and you can throw away that stump and try a fresh one."

"I cannot find any excuse against that," rejoined the detective, "so I will take one and smoke with you," and he took one from the proffered case, threw his own away and lighted anew.

"You remember my name, do you not?" the doctor asked, casually.

"Oh, yes; you are Doctor Gonda Gonsalvo. Have you forgotten mine, the reason you ask that? Mine is—"

"Kinworth."

"Right, sir; Prentiss Kinworth."

"You are stopping here during your stay in town, Mr. Kinworth?"

"Yes."

"Will it be out of place if I inquire where you are from?"

"Not in the least, sir, that I am aware of; I am from California."

"Indeed! That being the case, you are quite a distance from home. Ever been here before, if I may ask?"

"Oh, yes, I have been here before," Kinworth answered, "but not very recently. I am not unacquainted with Gotham."

"I thought perhaps you were, and that I might show you around a little. We have an elephant here of no mean size, you know."

"I am well aware of that," Kinworth laughingly acknowledged. "I have seen something of him."

"How would you like to drop in at some of the clubs? Or at some of the many palaces where Queen Fortune holds sway?"

"I have no objections, if you desire."

"Well, come along then. I am known at most of them, that is those of any reputation; and can see you through."

"Thank you. We may be able to while away a pleasant hour."

"We will go up to the Danaë, the queen of gaming-houses, if you have no objections."

"I have none whatever; lead on and I will follow thee."

They left the hotel, and set out together for another quarter of the city.

In saying that the "Danaë" was the queen of gaming-houses, the doctor was right. It held second place to none in the mighty city, "Danaë's Donjon" it was named in full, but it had come to be called simply "the Danaë."

When the doctor and the detective arrived there they had no trouble in getting in, for the doctor was known, and he vouched for his companion.

Outside, there was nothing about the house to betray the character of its interior. It was a brown-stone front, was situated on one of the fashionable thoroughfares in an aristocratic part of the city, and looked like any of the many handsome palaces of which Gotham can boast of as residences.

The outer doors were open, a light was in the hall, and lights were to be seen in the parlors, which were splendidly furnished.

A colored man-servant in livery came to the door, the doctor inquired for a certain fictitious personage, said a few words in a low tone, and no further trouble was met with.

Up the grand stairway the doctor went, Kinworth following, and at the top he turned along the hall to a door near the front.

There he rapped, and after a wicket had been pushed aside to learn who was at hand, the door was thrown open and they were admitted into the great *salon*.

A more richly and handsomely furnished room it is hard to imagine. It is almost useless to try to describe it. The floor was covered with a carpet of the thickest and softest sort, into which the feet sunk without a sound; the walls were hung with the heaviest of gold-embossed paper; handsome paintings and massive mirrors were on every hand, and the furniture proper could not be surpassed. The room was long and wide, and was fitted up altogether regardless of cost.

About half-way down the room, on the right side, was a bar of the costliest wood and make, and it was fitted up with extravagant splendor. Then there were buffets, sideboards, etc., all on the same gorgeous scale, and the contents of all were free to the patrons of the hall.

There were six large and beautiful chandeliers, all ablaze with light, and it was hard to find a place where shadows could linger, for the light rivaled the splendor of mid-day sun.

The gaming-tables, of which there were several, were simply superb.

Dr. Gonsalvo and the detective sauntered down through the room, the doctor seeming to be right at home there, and Kinworth none the less so.

"What do you think of it?" the doctor quietly asked.

"It is certainly a glittering den," the detective admitted.

"Have you anything in San Francisco that can equal it?"

"I think we could give it a close rub for the honor of—first place," was the response.

They stopped presently at a table where the game of faro was in progress, and where several young "bloods" were "bucking the tiger."

While they were looking on a young man came up behind them and touched the doctor on the arm. He was rather good-looking, solidly built, and about twenty-four or five years old.

The doctor turned, and seeing who it was, offered his hand, saying:

"Why, Waldemar, how d'e do? Glad to see you."

It was Waldemar Blackwall, and with him was his friend Dugald Cambeth.

Young Blackwall and the doctor shook hands, and then Waldemar introduced his friend.

"Glad to meet you," greeted the doctor, giving his hand. "And now, gentlemen," he said in turn, "let me introduce an acquaintance of mine," and he touched Kinworth on the arm to draw his attention.

The detective had heard and seen all, though seemingly absorbed with interest in the game he was watching.

He turned around, and at sight of him Dugald Cambeth gave a start. Kinworth showed not the least sign of recognition.

"Mr. Kinworth," the doctor said, "let me introduce you to Mr. Waldemar Blackwall. Also to Mr. Cambeth. Gentlemen, this is Mr. Prentiss Kinworth, of San Francisco."

Young Blackwall gave his hand, but Cambeth simply bowed slightly, and the four fell into conversation.

As that conversation would be of little interest to the reader, it may be passed over. Kinworth learned that young Blackwall was the son of Blackwall the banker, and was secretly glad that he had met him. A pleasant hour was passed, which might have been extended into hours, had Kinworth accepted the invitations of his friends to play. But that he did not do. He politely but firmly declined, saying that he had no money to lose, and no desire to win another's. Finally they parted company, and the detective returned to his hotel. He had scored a big point in having met young Blackwall.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CARD PLAYED TOO LATE.

MANCRED BLACKWALL wanted to have an interview with the California detective; but, how to bring it about he did not know.

He consulted with Dr. Gonsalvo, who, on the morning after the events recorded in the preceding chapter, called at the bank.

"Gonsalvo," he confided, "I want to see that detective and have a talk with him. How am I to bring it about? Of course I do not want him to suspect that I am anxious to see him."

"Suppose I invite him to my house, and you happen in?"

"That might do, but that would not afford me a private interview with him. I want to see him alone."

"I might have a convenient urgent call out, and leave you together until my return."

"Yes, that might do. Will you fix it for me?"

"I will, sir."

"All right. You can let me know when to call, and at what hour."

"I will attend to it, and you can depend on it. By the way, perhaps you would like to know what I think of the man, after what I have told you about my making his acquaintance further last night."

"Yes, so I would. What is your opinion of him?"

"My opinion is that he is not nearly so deep as you have been giving him credit for."

"You think not?"

"I am sure of it. Here is an incident to illustrate. We were in the Danae last night, when your son and a friend came up and spoke to me. Kinworth was looking at the players, and although I stood right at his side he did not notice that any one had spoken to me, and I had to actually pull him around to introduce him. Not by any means an Argus, though a detective."

"So it would seem."

"And he is not either deep or shrewd, so far as I have been able to judge. He is good company, and bright enough, but not by any means my ideal of a detective. You need have no dread of an interview with him, that I can assure you."

"I am glad to hear that, but the Kinworth Agency has a great reputation on the Pacific Slope."

"It was never earned by this young man."

Just at that moment the head clerk came in to announce a caller.

"It is Mr. Kinworth, the young man who was here the other day," he explained.

The banker and the doctor exchanged glances. "Have you told him that there is any one in here with me?" the banker asked.

"No, sir."

"Do not do so, then. Doctor, you step into that closet there and shut the door and remain out of sight. Griffit, let him come in."

The doctor hastened to the place of hiding indicated, and in a few minutes the detective entered the room.

"Do I address Mr. Mancred Blackwall?" he inquired.

"You do, sir," the banker informed. "Will you sit down, sir?"

Kinworth did so.

"I have called," he observed, "to see if you are able to give me any information on a certain matter. I was here the other day and had an interview with your head clerk, which was satisfactory as far as it went, but not satisfactory enough. He may have spoken of it to you."

"I do not think he has, sir," the banker carelessly observed.

Kinworth made his business known in about the same words he had employed in stating it to Griffit. Besides, he stated what he had learned from the head clerk.

"And what additional information do you think I can give you?" the banker very quietly asked.

"I do not know that you can give me any,"

was the answer. "I have come in to ascertain that. Did you know Mr. Whitford, and anything about his family and business?"

"I did not, sir. When I came to New York it was after he was dead and his business all closed up."

"It is as I feared, then," Kinworth observed. "I was in hopes that you had known him, and would be able to give me some points."

As he said this the detective placed his left hand on the edge of the table, as though about to rise. On the little finger of that hand was the ring that had been given into his keeping by Mrs. Milburn.

The banker's eyes caught sight of the ring, and turned to it, naturally, and as they rested upon it the detective noticed that there appeared in them a sudden start of recognition.

He had gained the point he was after! He knew that Mancred Blackwall recognized the ring!

Blackwall said no word and made no sign, further, that was suggestive, and in a second had recovered himself completely. It had been, in fact, a mere mental start, with no outward sign other than the detective had caught in the man's eyes.

"No," the banker averred, "I cannot help you any. I would gladly do so if I could."

The detective rose.

"Then I will trouble you no further," he remarked. "I am greatly obliged to you for the interview you have granted me."

"Do not mention it," the banker waived. "If there is any way in which I can be of service to you, call again."

"Thank you, sir."

With that Kinworth took his leave, and Gonsalvo came out of his hiding-place.

"Why didn't you question him a little?" he asked.

"Because I did not want to show too much interest in the matter," was the reply. "We will arrange the meeting at your house, and then the opportunity will be much more favorable."

"Yes, you are right. What do you think of him?"

"About the same as you do. I am of the opinion that he was never cut out for a detective; he is decidedly too simple for a New York crowd."

"Right you are," the doctor agreed, "and I am of the opinion that he can easily be turned off on a false trail, as they say out West."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it. I have an idea, anyhow."

"What is it?"

"Why not have Griffit give him a wild story? He can say that he has been reflecting upon the matter, and his memory on various points has refreshed itself. He can say that he remembers Abington went to Chicago, for instance, with his wife and little ones, and that there he killed himself; or something of that sort."

"Doctor, you have hit it exactly!" the banker exclaimed. "Chicago having been mentioned in the case already, it is just the place to turn his attention to. When Parmilye put that woman in the San Francisco asylum he said that she was a widow, native of Chicago."

"Good! It could not have been better!"

"It might have been better," the banker asserted, "if Parmilye had been a little more foresighted in his work. If he had given the woman a false name, for instance, and had not been fool enough to leave her engagement-ring on her finger—"

"He did that?"

"He did, and what is worse now, that very ring was on the finger of that detective when he was in here. I recognized it. Of course I took care not to let him see that I did, though."

"It is too bad that Parmilye did not exercise more care."

"Of course it is, but it is gratifying to know that Parmilye is out of the way forever, and should this detective get onto his track the trail will lead him simply to a grave in Greenwood."

"Ha, ha, ha! That is the case in a nutshell. By the way, I have seen a man who tells me that the grave is all right, and nothing can be suspected."

"Good enough. Oh, I guess we can defy all the detectives that have a mind to come against us."

"And how about the insurance companies? Have you presented the claims?"

"I sent them in this morning. Thought I would not be in any hurry about it, you know. We will take it very easy and let matters run along in their own course. It will not do to seem anxious."

"That is the proper way. And now, about Miss Parmilye. You understand that I want to marry her, if I can win her hand. Parmilye told you, of course."

"Yes, I know all about it. I shall ask her and her old housekeeper to come to my house, and then I will use my influence in your behalf. I understand Parmilye's wishes in the matter perfectly well."

"Do you think she will accept your offer?"

"I feel pretty confident that she will. She has said to my wife that she will not come into our house as a dependent, and she will not have

to. There will be something like thirty thousand dollars for her out of her father's share of the business and his private property."

"I am glad to hear that."

"And about your coming into partnership here, that had better rest very quietly for a long time. Of course you cannot hope to marry the girl within a year, and I would suggest that you wait a year after that. No suspicion must be aroused."

"I agree with you fully, sir."

Further conversation was had, and Dr. Gonsalvo went away.

When he was gone, the banker called Griffit into the office.

"Griffit," he said to him, "I do not fully agree with you in regard to that detective's great shrewdness. I think he can be overreached without much trouble."

"Yes, sir?" passively but interrogatively.

"I do. More than that, I want you to be the one to mislead him."

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to drop him a little note, saying that your memory serves you better now that you have been thinking over the matter upon which he made inquiries. You have just got his address, by chance, from Doctor Gonsalvo, and hasten to drop him a line."

The banker went on and laid the outline of the plan before him, and when their conference ended, Griffit carried out the instructions.

Kinworth, on leaving the bank, had returned to the hotel. He had nothing further to do now, until the arrival of Mrs. Milburn. He was seated in the reading-room, thinking that it was about time for dinner, when one of the call-boys came up and handed him a letter.

Opening it, he read:

"MR. KINWORTH:—

"DEAR SIR:—Since you were here making inquiries about Reuben Whitford, etc., I have had the matter in mind, and some other points have come to memory. Thinking they may be of service, I drop this note to you. You inquired about one Mancred. I remember that Abington had a friend of that name in Chicago with whom he used to correspond. Further, I now think that when Abington and his wife left New York they went to Chicago."

"Yours truly, JASON GRIFFIT."

The detective smiled as he read, and put the note into his pocket.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CRITICAL MOMENT.

DETECTIVE KINWORTH was not deceived; quite the contrary! He saw through the little game as readily as though some one had laid the facts bare before him.

"This is good, very good indeed!" he mused. "It is good for me, but good for nothing so far as its design is concerned. A school-boy ought to see through it. It is clear that Blackwall and his man Griffit have held a consultation, and this is the result of it. They desire to put me off on a false scent. That goes to indicate that it is getting too warm for them."

"Blackwall knows something about this matter, and that is clearly proved by the fact that he recognized this ring. Is it possible that he is Abington? It is not by any means impossible. I shall find out. Whatever it may be, there is something in the wind to make him want to throw me off the track. Perhaps the dead Parmilye was Abington! We shall see."

The next day passed without any incident worthy of record.

In the evening Detective Kinworth went down to the ferry and crossed over to Jersey City.

He was in disguise, and looked to be about fifty years old. He had white hair and side-whiskers, wore a high beaver hat and carried a heavy silver-headed cane. His coat was a long frock, and being open it displayed a white vest.

No one would have recognized him.

On reaching the Jersey side he went into the Pennsylvania Railroad station, and there made inquiries concerning the arrival of a train from the West.

He was informed that the train was about on time, and when the time of its arrival drew near he went out under the sheds to watch for some one whom he expected.

The train rolled into the shed, the passengers poured out of the cars, and in a short time the detective espied the person for whom he was looking.

This was a lady, none other than Mrs. Milburn, of San Francisco.

She had a companion with her, a woman about her own age, or perhaps a little younger, and as they left the car Mrs. Milburn looked around as though searching for some one whom she had expected would meet her.

When they came down near the entrance to the ferry-house the detective advanced, lifted his hat as he approached, and said:

"Mrs. Milburn, allow me to welcome you, and congratulate you that your long journey is at an end."

The two ladies had stopped, and Mrs. Milburn looked at the detective in surprise.

"I do not know you, sir," she said.

"There was only one person whom you expected to meet you on your arrival," the detec-

tive observed, "and I am that one. I am Prentiss Kinworth."

"You? Impossible!"

He smiled at the incredulity.

"I am your detective, madam. For reasons, I thought it best to meet you in disguise. But, I will explain this later. Allow me to carry your satchels, ladies, and if you will give me your checks I will see that your trunks are forwarded speedily to the hotel."

"You must first satisfy me that you are the person you claim to be," Mrs. Milburn said, decisively.

The detective now laughed outright.

"I expected that," he observed. "Do you recognize this ring?" and he held out his left hand, displaying the ring the lady had given him at their first interview.

"I do," she answered. "I see it is all right. Now that I know you I can recognize your features. Allow me to present you to my friend Mrs. Ekyngs, Mr. Kinworth."

The detective acknowledged the introduction, the ladies gave him their handbags and checks, and he conducted them to the ferry-boat.

Arriving on the New York side, he left them for a moment while he delivered the checks to the Dodd agent at the ferry, and then he rejoined them and all entered a hotel stage.

On entering the hotel he engaged their rooms, waited and saw that their trunks were properly delivered, and then, saying that he would call on the morrow, went to his own room.

He had a room in this hotel now, still retaining the one where he had first stopped. Playing now a double role, this was necessary. When in his own proper person, he would stop at the Hotel; but in this new character, with which he had adopted the name of Mr. Armstrong, he would stop at the hotel where the ladies were.

It was about half-past ten next morning when "Mr. Armstrong" sent his card up to Mrs. Milburn, and the boy brought back word that he should come right up.

The detective was soon in the lady's presence. Mrs. Milburn had a suite of four rooms, and she conducted the detective into one of them where they could hold their interview in privacy.

When they were alone, and the doors closed, Mrs. Milburn asked:

"Well, Mr. Kin—"

"Armstrong, madam, pray do not forget," the detective corrected. "To call me by my right name might, under certain circumstances, prove very disastrous to my plans."

"Very well, I will keep the point in mind. Now before we proceed further will you oblige me by removing for a moment your false hair and beard?"

"With pleasure, madam!" and he complied with the request.

It was a wonderful transformation from age to youth.

"Thank you; that will do," the lady said, now thoroughly satisfied. "It gives me renewed assurance to see your face as it was at our first meeting. May I inquire why you are in disguise?"

"It is in order that you may not become known to those who may yet prove themselves your enemies," was the explanation given. "I have made acquaintances since I came here, and my business has been made known. It could not be otherwise, as I had to push my inquiries openly. Everything is not going as smoothly as I could wish, and for that reason I do not want your identity known to those who know me."

"I understand you, sir. Well, what have you learned? That is the all-important question now, to me."

"I will inform you as clearly and briefly as I can, madam. What I shall state are not suppositions, but facts. Your maiden name was Celeste Whitford. Your father's name was Reuben Whitford. He—"

"That is the name!" the lady excitedly exclaimed.

"He was a banker on Wall street, in this city," the detective went on. "He had in his employ a young man named Henry Abington. You married him, and had two children, one a boy and the other a girl. I have searched the records, and have found the date of your marriage and the dates of birth of your children, but have not been able yet to ascertain their names. When you had been married about one year your first child, the boy, was born, and three years later the second child was born. Shortly after that your father died."

"Wonderful!" Mrs. Milburn exclaimed. "How have you been able to get at all these facts in so short a time?"

"Simply by following up the clues you were able to furnish, madam," was the respectful reply.

"You say you have learned the dates of the events mentioned?"

"Yes, madam. Henry Abington and Celeste Whitford were married July 30, 1854. Their first child was born June 5, 1855. The second was born May 20, 1858. Your father died August 10, 1858."

"Wonderful, indeed. But, go on."

"After the birth of your second child you were an invalid, and your husband was none too kind to you. In about a year or less after your father's death your husband and you disappeared, with your children, and there the trail abruptly ends."

"And that is all you have learned?"

"That is all, so far as the thread of narrative would run. But I have clues to more, and with your help I hope soon to unravel the whole mystery."

"Have you learned anything about any person named Mancred?"

"There is a Mancred Blackwall in this city against whom I have suspicion. Now, is your memory any clearer on any points, from what you have heard?"

"Only that the name Reuben certainly belongs to the name Whitford, as it comes fresh to mind now."

"It is my intention to take you to places which were once familiar to you, and then trust to those familiar scenes to bring back to your wandered memory other items of value to the search, such as names, etc."

"A very good plan. I will co-operate with you most heartily."

"If agreeable to you we will go out this afternoon, and I will conduct you to places which cannot fail to bring your mind to events of the past."

"It will be perfectly agreeable to me. In truth, I am very anxious to push the work forward as fast as possible."

Their interview was not a short one, and all the points of the case were gone over, so far as the detective cared to make them fully known to his client at this stage of the work; and when they parted it was with the understanding that he should call for her at two o'clock.

At that hour he was again on hand, and they set out for the hotel; Mrs. Ekyngs, Mrs. Milburn's companion, accompanying them.

They were in a car iage.

The carriage rolled away toward the lower part of the city, turned from Broadway into Fulton street, proceeded along Fulton to William street, and down William to Wall street, where it stopped, as the detective had previously directed.

"Here we will get out, ladies," the detective announced. "We will walk a little distance, and then will take the carriage again."

They alighted, and the carriage went up Wall street toward Broadway, they following on foot in the same direction.

Kinworth had not informed Mrs. Milburn where she was going.

Presently she exclaimed:

"Oh! This is the street that I remembered so well! See, it is just as I described it! It runs slightly up-hill; there are offices on both sides; yonder is the big church— Yes, yes, it is the same as it used to be!"

"We are approaching the bank, madam," the detective notified. "If you have the inclination to enter, and think your nerves will stand the strain, do so. Say nothing, however."

"Yes, yes," the lady excitedly ejaculated, "yonder it is; I remember it well! This is my vision, sir, exactly, only now it is the reality. Yes, I will go in, for I am sure I will be inclined to do so. Now I am living my old life, sir, and the present is like a dream."

She was speaking in a low but eager tone, and Kinworth felt much concern for what might happen in the next few moments.

They went on, came to the building that had formerly been occupied by Mr. Whitford, and Mrs. Milburn turned and mounted the steps. Her companion had hold of her arm, and Kinworth was close behind them. They entered, and a moment later, Mrs. Milburn uttered a piercing scream and fell into the detective's arms in a deathlike faint.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MYSTERIOUS MENTAL PHENOMENA.

It was a moment of excitement; but Kinworth was perfectly calm.

Those who were in the room quickly gathered around, and one of the officers of the bank hastened out.

"Carry the lady right into the office," he directed.

Kinworth would not allow that. For her to recover in a room that had undoubtedly once been familiar to her, might prove too severe for her nerves.

"No, it is not necessary," he quietly observed. "Our carriage is right at hand. This is nothing. Accustomed to like spells."

"Shall I help you with her to the carriage, then, sir?" the bank officer asked.

"Yes, if you will," the detective answered.

They took her carefully in their arms and carried her out, and it was but a little distance to Broadway where the carriage was waiting.

Reaching the carriage, Mrs. Ekyngs got in first, as the detective directed, and then the inanimate form of Mrs. Milburn was lifted in, Kinworth following.

Mrs. Ekyngs had some smelling-salts with her, and she applied the bottle to the fainted woman's nostrils, Kinworth at the same time rub-

bing her hands briskly. The carriage, meantime, started on its return to the hotel.

Before they had gone far Mrs. Milburn showed signs of recovery, and ere long she was able to sit up.

"Where have I been? and what has happened?" she presently asked, looking around her in a bewildered manner.

"You had better remain quiet until we reach the hotel," the detective advised. "I will tell you all about it then, madam."

"The hotel?" she repeated; "what hotel do you— Oh, yes, now I remember. I am in New York."

"You remember where you have been?" Kinworth asked.

"Yes, I recall it now. We came up the street and entered the bank, and then the vision broke and I could grasp no more of it— But, it was no vision this time; it was the reality. What happened, sir?"

"When you entered the bank you screamed and fainted, madam."

"Then I have just come out of the faint; is that it?"

"Yes, you have just recovered."

"What was it that caused me to scream? What did I see?"

"I do not know, madam. I was in hope that you could tell me that when you came to. Do you not recall it?"

"No. It seems the same as the vision I told you about. I got just so far, and then it broke and I recall nothing more."

"It is too bad. But, it must be tried again. To-morrow, when you have fully recovered from this shock, I will take you to other familiar scenes."

"It is not necessary to wait, sir. I shall be myself in a few minutes. We may as well go now as at another time."

"If you are willing, madam. It is for you to say."

"Let us go, by all means. I am feverish to push the matter to an end."

"Very well, it shall be as you say."

Kinworth stopped the carriage and gave new directions to the driver, and they proceeded.

"We will go first to the house where Mr. Whitford used to reside," the detective informed. "It is there that your childhood was no doubt spent, Mrs. Milburn, and if the house is unchanged, it cannot fail to arouse old-time memories in your mind."

They talked the matter openly in the presence of Mrs. Ekyngs now, Mrs. Milburn having signified her willingness to do so.

"I hope that it is unchanged, then," Mrs. Milburn earnestly declared, "for I want to meet with some scene that will rend asunder this veil of mystery and let in the light upon my darkened memory."

After a drive of considerable length the carriage finally stopped in a quiet street, and Kinworth called Mrs. Milburn's attention to a certain house.

"Do you recognize it?" he asked.

"I hardly know," was the response. "It seems familiar, and yet I cannot bring it to memory fully. You say this was my home?"

"So I infer. This was the residence of Reuben Whitford."

"If I could look around at the neighborhood from the windows of the house, it might prove more satisfactory than looking at the house itself."

"That is true," the detective coincided. "If it is necessary, you shall have the opportunity of doing so. We will get out and let you take a view of your surroundings from the sidewalk, if you desire."

"Let us do so."

They alighted; the detective told the driver to go to the next corner and wait, and they followed on in the same direction slowly.

Mrs. Milburn looked about her with strong interest.

Presently she exclaimed:

"Yes, this is familiar to me, Mr. Armstrong! I bring that quaint old church to mind clearly. Why, that is where Dorinda used to attend so faithfully!"

"And who was Dorinda?" Kinworth quickly asked. "That is a new name, Mrs. Milburn."

"Dorinda?" the lady repeated, "Did I say Dorinda?"

"You certainly did, madam."

Looking at her quickly, Kinworth noticed that she had just experienced one of her memory-flashes, as they had both come to call the peculiar mental trance-like visions to which she was subject.

"I certainly do not know now," she declared.

"It is gone again. The name is familiar enough, now that you have spoken it, but I cannot place it. Oh! will this cloud ever pass away?"

She sighed wearily as she uttered the words.

They had all come to a stop on the sidewalk, and the detective ventured to remind:

"It was the old church over the way there that brought the name to your memory," he said. "You observed that that is where Dorinda used to attend so faithfully."

Mrs. Milburn looked again, and Kinworth watched her narrowly.

"You are Miss Celeste Whitford," he said, in

a low tone. "You live here with your father, Reuben Whitford. He is a banker on Wall street. Just over there [the far-away look was coming into the lady's eyes] is the little old church where Dorinda attends so regularly. Who is Dorinda?"

The question was put in a louder tone.

Mrs. Milburn started.

"Did you speak?" she asked.

"What were you thinking about?" demanded Kinworth.

"Why, my mind reverted again to the little church there, and I seemed to be dreaming. I thought you were talking to me, but I guess I failed to attend to what you were saying. Pardon me."

"Nothing to pardon, madam. But, what were your thoughts?"

"I was reflecting that I was Miss Whitford, daughter of Reuben Whitford, and that I lived in the house there. Then I thought of the church, and my mind seemed to be going still further when you startled me. What did you ask?"

"I asked—who is Dorinda?"

"Dorinda? It is gone; I do not know."

"Well, we will not stop here longer. One point is gained, and that is that you were indeed the daughter of Reuben Whitford, and that you used to live here. Let us take the carriage and go to another scene."

"Just as you direct, sir."

They passed on to the corner where the carriage was now waiting for them, and entered the vehicle once more.

They were driven to another street not a great distance away, and the carriage stopped before a house of neat but unpretending appearance.

"We will get out here and enter this house," remarked the detective. "The family who live here have been apprised of our coming. Let me go to the door first, however, and explain who I am, as my appearance is not the same as it was when I called here the other day."

"Very well, sir."

Kinworth left the carriage and rung the bell, and when the door was opened by a pleasant-faced woman of middle age, stated his business.

He had been there before, and was now welcome received.

Stepping back to the carriage he assisted the ladies out, and telling the driver to wait, led them into the house.

He watched Mrs. Milburn closely.

As they entered the door the lady gave a start, but recovered herself with an effort, and they followed the woman of the house up to the second floor.

The house was arranged for two families, and this woman, Mrs. Spaldry by name, occupied the upper floors.

These rooms were the ones where Henry Abington and his wife had lived during their residence in New York after their marriage.

On reaching the second floor, Mrs. Spaldry led the way along the hall to the front room of her apartments, and opened the door and invited them to enter.

No sooner were they within, and the door closed, than Mrs. Milburn gave a cry almost like a cry of pain, clasped her hands to her head, and sunk moaning upon the nearest chair.

Kinworth was not surprised. If anything would drive the cloud from her brain, he had felt sure that this once-familiar scene would do it. But the result was something more than he had looked for.

"I shall go mad, mad!" the woman muttered, as she rocked herself to and fro. "Would that I had died when poor papa died, and my children with me! Henry, why have you become so cruel to me? I cannot help it that I am ill! Oh, my poor head; I know that I am not myself at times. Dorinda! Dorinda!"

Kinworth realized what had taken place. Mrs. Milburn's mind had gone back to the time of the first part of her life, and she was living it again. Had she become again insane? Would she not return to her recent soundness of mind? He had grave fears as to the result of the experiment.

The lady looked around upon them all with a wild, staring expression in her eyes.

"Oh, Dorinda, why do you not come?" she called. "Who are these persons? I do not know any of you. Where are my children? Where is baby Essylt?"

She looked from one to another of those around her with a helpless expression that was pitiable to behold.

"Speak to her," Kinworth directed Mrs. Ekyngs. "Call her by name sharply."

"Mrs. Milburn!" the woman complied, "do you not know me?"

For one brief instant a gleam of intelligence flashed in the lady's eyes, but it was gone immediately. She was again insane. The two divisions of her life had suddenly changed places. With her the past was now the present, while the present was hid behind the veil which divided her memory in half.

CHAPTER XIX.

BOTH WILLING, BUT FATE ADVERSE.

"GOOD-MORNING to you, Missus Snipes."

"Good-morning to you, Mister Woggs."

"I hope that you are well this morning, Missus Snipes. You certainly look well. You are as fresh and rosy as a girl of fifty, upon my word you are."

"I am quite well, I thank you, Mister Woggs, and I hope that you are the same yourself. But I can see that you are. You are as cheery as a school-boy."

"Thank you, Missus Snipes. Yes, I am quite well, I thank you."

Pericles Woggs and Dorinda Snipes.

It was morning, and after opening their stands for the business of the day, the two old persons greeted each other in their usual manner.

Their morning greeting seldom varied half a dozen words. It was nearly always the same, and they both looked forward to it with as much pleasure and certainty as Mrs. Snipes looked forward to her cat and Mr. Woggs to his pipe and paper.

"Well, and how was business with you yesterday, Missus Snipes?" Woggs presently asked.

"Only fair to middlin', Mister Woggs, only fair to middlin', yesterday. How was it with you?"

"Well, it was middlin' to tol'able yesterday, middlin' to tol'able, Missus Snipes," Mr. Woggs answered. "I have seen it better, Missus Snipes."

"Oh, yes, I have seen it a good deal better, Mister Woggs," Mrs. Snipes agreed quickly. "I have seen it a very good deal better. Business ain't as brisk as it was a few years ago, it seems to me."

"I believe you are right, Missus Snipes, I certainly believe you are right. I am inclined to think that this country is goin' to the dogs about as fast as it can go. Why, there ain't half the demand for Jews-harps that there was ten years ago."

"I realize it, Mister Woggs, I realize it more and more every day. Peanuts ain't nothin' like they used to be. There is too many furrenners comin' into this country, Mister Woggs."

"You never spoke a truer word, Missus Snipes, never in your life. It is the furren element that is playin' the very dickens with this country. Why, in a few years, Missus Snipes, us 'Mericans will be under some furren yoke, if we don't look out. You see what it is fifty years from now, and mark my words."

"Fifty years from now will be long after our day, I am afraid, Mister Woggs. You forget that we are not very young."

"True, true, true. Verily, Missus Snipes, all flesh is grass, and we can't shut our eyes to the fact if we would. Didn't we have 'zample of it only a little while ago in the death of Mr. Parmilye of the bank there?"

"You are right, Mister Woggs."

"And we can't tell whose turn it will be to go next."

"You are right again. Flesh truly is grass, Mister Woggs, and poor grass at that."

"True, true. And all the more reason why we should make use of the time while it is ours, Missus Snipes, and get all the enjoyment out of the speedin' hours that we can."

"Nobody realizes that more than I do, Mister Woggs."

"But I suppose you are still set on keepin' that tom-cat, in spite of all."

"Mister Woggs, I could not think of parting with McAllester, as I have told you time and again. You ought to know it by this time. On your part I suppose you are still bent upon sticking to that stinking old pipe, and living under a cloud of smoke all your days."

"Missus Snipes, would you rob me of about the only enjoyment I have in life? Take away my pipe and bakky, and you rob me of my all. You might as well take away food and drink. One is no more necessary to me than the other."

"Tush! Bosh and nonsense, Mister Woggs! There was my half-sister, who used to dip snuff with a rag. She was allus a-dippin'. You could find rags by th' dozen about the house till it would 'most gag you. You could smell snuff all over the house. She used to think the same as you do. Once one of her rags got into a pie, and when she cut the pie she happened to get the very piece it was in. She took a bite, and—Well, you would 'a' thought she was tryin' to heave up what she'd e't ten days before. She dipped no more snuff, and I am tellin' ye."

Woggs threw back his head and laughed heartily. That seemed to tickle him all over.

"But," he presently argued, "you can't compare such a filthy habit as that with smokin', can you?"

"And why not? There ain't no more'n a mile o' difference between 'em, when it is a stinking old pipe like yours, I'll be bound."

"But, the idea of snuff on a rag, Missus Snipes. Ugh! the very thought almost makes me gag. Now, if your half-sister had simply smoked, as many good old women used to do—"

"You can't draw th' line that way, Mister Woggs, no use your tryin'. We may as well never mention the subject again."

"Alas! no, I suppose not, Missus Snipes, for I could never consent to have a tom-cat in the house."

"Nor could I a-bear the smell of that old pipe."

"Alas, alas!"

"But what is the news this morning, Mister Woggs?"

"Really, I haven't looked, Missus Snipes. But I will do so soon, and will come over again and tell you about anything that I think will interest you."

"I shall be glad if you will do so."

"How nice it would be if we could only sit together here all the livelong day, Missus Snipes—"

"Now, there you go again, Mister Woggs. We may just as well give it up forever. You sick to your pipe, and I'll stick to McAllester."

"Alas! But, by the way, Missus Snipes, speakin' of Mr. Parmilye, I have seen by the papers that he wasn't worth as much as folks thought he was. You know you said you supposed he must be awful rich, or I did; anyhow, it was one of us that made the remark. He hasn't left a great deal."

"Is that so? But, then, that is the way. You think a person is so-an'-so as long as he lives; but when he is dead, then the truth comes out, and you see that he was only so-and-so."

"You are right, Missus Snipes. It takes grim death to tear off the masks. Oh, there is nothin' so sure as death, and that is why I say all flesh is grass—"

"Mister Woggs, there you go again."

"Well, well, it is true, alas! But, the papers say that Parmilye wasn't so rich after all, and that his daughter won't have over twenty or twenty-five thousand when they come to wind things up."

"As much as any woman ought to have, Mister Woggs."

"Well, yes, I agree with you there; but that ain't all of it. It seems that his life was insured in a good many companies to the tune of about seventy-five thousand dollars or thereabouts, and that 'most all of it goes to his partner, Blackwall."

"The rascal!"

"Who, Parmilye?"

"No; I mean Blackwall. And I say: The rascal! What right has he to it, I'd like to know?"

"I cannot see that myself. One would think that the daughter would come in for it. But, then, it must have been some business transaction."

"I don't see how it could be."

"Well, for instance: Suppose I took in a partner who hadn't as much money as I had, and we bought Jews-harps. Suppose I paid for them all, and he insured his life to my credit to make me whole. See?"

"Not very clear, Mister Woggs, but then I am only a woman and not so well-read as you be."

"That is how it is, I think, but it is funny for all that."

"And you can set it down that Blackwall is a funny customer, too," Mrs. Snipes impressed further, with a wink and a nod.

"From what you have told me I begin to think so," Woggs made response.

"You can rely upon it, Mister Woggs. A wink is as good as a nod from me, Mister Woggs; every bit as good as a nod, sir, a wink is, from me."

"I believe you, Missus Snipes."

"This is a wink, Mister Woggs," giving practical illustration, "and you can't say that one isn't just as good as t'other, now can you?"

"Well, no, Missus Snipes, I must confess I can't," Woggs admitted.

"That is all the proof you need ask for then. I would not mind tellin' you about it all, Mister Woggs, but I want to prove that a woman can keep a secret. So I am sure that you will excuse me if I say: Never do you mind, Mister Woggs, never do you mind."

"Of course you are excused, Missus Snipes. You are a smart woman, Missus Snipes," and he looked upon her with a good deal of pride; "you are a smart woman, as I have allus said of you. If it wasn't for that tom—"

"And that pipe!"

"Missus Snipes, we may as well never mention it again."

"That is what I have been tryin' to impress upon you. But, let's drop it and let it stay dropped. Besides Mr. Blackwall, there is that little Griffit. As I have told you, he knows somethin', that little Griffit does, and if you only knowed what he knows, you would know somethin' too, Mister Woggs."

"No doubt of it."

"I have not been here in front of this bank's doors for years for nothin', Mister Woggs, not by a good deal I ain't. And I knowed that little Griffit long afore I came here, too. Also—But never mind about that. I know how to keep a secret, if no other woman does. That Griffit used to be in a bank on Wall street, he did."

"A good while ago, Missus Snipes?"

"Oh, yes, a good while ago. 'Most thirty years, I should say."

"And don't he know you, and that you know him?"

"If he does he has never let on, and I am not the woman to put myself for'd. But I guess he

don't. Truth to tell, Mister Woggs, when I first went into this business I was ashamed of it, I am sorry to say, and I tried not to be recognized."

"It is nothing to be ashamed of, Missus Snipes."

"Far be it from me to think so now, Mister Woggs! Yes, I knowed Griffit. I could tell you a story about a man who married the banker's only daughter, and what a rascal he turned out to be. But that would be tellin' my secret, so you will excuse me if I say again—Never do you mind, Mister Woggs, never do you mind."

"Missus Snipes, you are the smartest woman I know. But I must get back to my own corner and attend to business. And I must read the news, too. Alas! were it not for that tomato—"

"And a vile smelling pipe!"

Mr. Woggs heaved a mournful sigh and tottered away.

CHAPTER XX.

A STARTLING INCIDENT.

DETECTIVE KINWORTH was considerably puzzled and not a little worried.

What was he to do to bring Mrs. Milburn back to her right mind? And suppose she were now to remain permanently insane.

The latter thought troubled her most.

"What are we to do with her?" queried Mrs. Spaldry, who was greatly excited over the turn things had taken.

"Do not be alarmed, madam," answered Kinworth, "for we will take her away in a little time. She will do no harm to any one."

"Oh, it is not that," the woman hastened to explain; "but I am so sorry for her. Poor lady! is there anything I can do for you?"

This was addressed to Mrs. Milburn.

The demented lady looked at her for a moment, and slowly replied:

"You are not Dorinda; I want her. I want Dorinda Snipes! Where is she? has she gone home again?"

Kinworth caught an idea now, and kindly asked:

"Can we not send for her? Where does she live?"

"Yes, yes, send for her," Mrs. Milburn eagerly requested.

"But, where does she live?" the detective insisted.

"Why, at papa's, of course! She is our housekeeper, you know."

Here was another point gained. Some woman named Dorinda Snipes had been in the employ of Mr. Whitford as housekeeper. She was no doubt the elderly woman whom Mrs. Milburn remembered dimly. Kinworth made mental note of the name.

"Very well," he said, "we will send for her."

Turning to Mrs. Spaldry, he added:

"Go for Mrs. Snipes at once," giving her a signal to step out of the room on the pretended errand.

The woman obeyed, and went into an adjoining room.

"Where are my children?" Mrs. Milburn demanded. "Why are you keeping them from me? Where is my boy? Where is my baby?"

Kinworth paid close attention to all she said. Something in her words might give him valuable clues. Here, now, was the certain information from her own words that her oldest child had been a boy. The baby she had already spoken of as "Essylt." The detective lost nothing.

"Your children are perfectly safe," he said. "Are they not with Mrs. Snipes? She will take good care of them."

"Oh, yes, perhaps they are with her. My memory is so poor, and my head feels so queer. But, where is Henry? Oh, why will he treat me so coldly? Has he not been home?"

"No doubt he will soon be in," Kinworth pacified.

Again the poor woman began to weep and moan, and to rock herself to and fro.

"Oh, my poor head!" she muttered. "I shall go mad, mad! Oh, this is terrible to suffer so, and to be treated so coldly. Why can't we all die? No! no!" wildly, "you must not part me from my children! That will kill me. You say I must travel for my health? Why can't I take baby with me? Oh, Henry, do not ask me to leave my children behind, if we must go!"

Her manner was earnest and pleading, and the detective realized that she was living again in some trying experience of the past. He did not want to disturb her, and yet at the same time he was afraid to let her go on as she was.

"You are not going to leave me here—here in this strange city, and in this strange house, are you, Henry?" she presently demanded.

She sat looking at the floor, a picture of helpless despair, her hands clasped in her lap.

"But you will quickly send my children to me, will you not?" she spoke again. "I cannot live without them. Do not keep them from me. You say that if I stay here I will get well? Then I will stay; but, Henry, do not remain long away from me. You do not know how sad and lonesome it will be for me!"

Her words and manner touched the hearts of those who heard and saw her.

Kinworth was on the point of speaking to Mrs. Ekyngs, to suggest that they remove her to the hotel, when the poor lady suddenly sprang to her feet with an awful cry of anguish.

"Dead?" she screamed; "it cannot be! Oh, do tell me that it is not so, or I shall go mad indeed! My husband and children dead? Oh, doctor, it cannot be true!"

She looked straight ahead of her for a moment, and then, as though some one had spoken to confirm the truth of a previous statement, she dropped to the floor in a swoon.

"This must end," decided Kinworth, as he stooped beside her. "We must get her to the hotel before she recovers, Mrs. Ekyngs."

"Indeed, yes," that woman agreed.

Mrs. Spaldry now returned to the room.

"Can I be of any service?" she asked.

"Yes, if you can find some one to help me carry the lady out to the carriage, madam," the detective answered. "Please tell the coachman to come here," he added.

She went out, and in a moment the coachman was at hand.

With his help the detective took Mrs. Milburn tenderly up, and together they carried her from the house and placed her in the carriage. Mrs. Ekyngs had got in first as before, when Mrs. Milburn had fainted at the bank, and she received her friend and held her in her arms.

Kinworth paused to say something to Mrs. Spaldry, and then he too got in and the carriage started for the hotel.

The detective felt satisfied with the experiment in one respect, but he was alarmed as to the result of it in another. He feared that now Mrs. Milburn would remain permanently insane. If that proved true, it were better that she had never undertaken to solve the mystery at all.

He was satisfied with it, on the other hand, because it had given him a few more points upon which to work. Now he had the name of the elderly woman who had been with Mrs. Abington, and the name of the female child.

Small items, to be sure, but he knew how to make use of them.

As soon as they were in the carriage they set to work to restore Mrs. Milburn to consciousness, the same as before, and finally succeeded.

But, her mind was not right. She was still under the cloud that the excitement had cast over her.

"Where are we now, Henry?" she asked.

"What city is this? When shall we arrive at our destination?"

This was some minutes after she had come to, when she had had time to glance around.

As she spoke she looked at the detective.

"Who are you, sir?" she instantly demanded.

"Where am I? Where is my husband—Henry Abington?"

"Perhaps we shall see him when we reach the hotel," Kinworth made answer. He did not want to try to bring her memory back to the present until they had arrived there. He was afraid of the result further excitement might produce.

"I cannot understand anything of all this," the lady complained. "My head is in a perfect whirl. Where am I? Who am I? Oh! there is my husband now! Stop the carriage, quick!"

She had sprung up and was trying to open the door. Kinworth signaled for the driver to stop.

"Let me out! Let me out, I say, and do not detain me a moment!" Mrs. Milburn demanded; and she already had the door open.

The detective followed the direction of her gaze, and saw Waldemar Blackwall and his friend Dugald Cambeth passing along!

Before the carriage had come to a stop the lady had her foot upon the step, and the instant it did stop, she sprang out.

It had all occupied only a few seconds' time.

Kinworth would have detained her, but was afraid to try to hold her back, for in doing so he might cause her to fall. Her movements had been so sudden and unlooked-for that he had no time to act without using violence.

What he did was to spring out after her as quickly as possible. As he did so he motioned the driver to pull in to the curb.

Meantime, no sooner was Mrs. Milburn out of the carriage than she ran forward to Waldemar Blackwall, threw her arms around him and exclaimed:

"Oh, Henry! My husband, my husband!"

Detective Kinworth was amazed, but, that was not to be compared with the amazement and embarrassment of young Blackwall.

"Madam," he cried, "you have made a mistake. I do not know you. I am not your husband."

As he uttered the hurried words he tried to escape from her embrace.

"Not my husband!" Mrs. Milburn exclaimed; "how can you say that? You know that you are my husband, Henry, and why do you deny it? Do you disown me, then, after having done all else you can? Where are my children?"

She had allowed him to break away from her, and stood regarding him with a helpless, wistful expression.

"You have made a great mistake," the young

man insisted. "I am not your husband, madam, nor anybody's; I assure you that you have mistaken me for some one else."

A crowd had collected. It takes but a few seconds to draw a crowd in the busy streets of New York. A policeman was pushing his way to the front.

Kinworth took the matter in hand. Such an event as this had surprised him completely, and he had moved slowly in order to see what would follow.

"Move off out of her sight, sir," he directed in a low tone to Waldemar; "she is—" and he finished the sentence by tapping his forehead with his finger.

"I thought so," the young man commented, and he lost no time in starting.

Kinworth saw that Mrs. Milburn was determined that he should not get out of her sight, and had to adopt a determined course.

Catching the lady by the arm he drew her around quickly but not harshly, and exclaimed: "Mrs. Milburn!"

The lady gave a great start, came out of the spell she had been under, looked about her in amazement, and asked:

"Why, what has happened? Where am I—"

"We must return to the hotel," Kinworth interrupted, fearing that she would speak his name. "Come! Here is the carriage waiting, and Mrs. Ekyngs is in it."

"What is the matter here?" demanded the policeman.

"Nothing, nothing at all, sir," answered the detective, but at the same time motioning that the lady was not right in mind; "just make room for us to get into our carriage, officer, and we will be off."

The policeman "caught on" to the signal immediately, lent his assistance, and in a few moments Mrs. Milburn was in the carriage and being driven rapidly on toward the hotel where she was staying.

It was a relief to Kinworth that she was regaining her right mind.

CHAPTER XXI.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

WALDEMAR BLACKWALL and his companion lost no time in getting away from the scene, as stated.

"Well, of all things expected and unexpected," Cambeth observed, "that takes the prize."

"I should say so!" observed young Blackwall.

"Ha, ha! It was rich, though! You had a point on me, the other night, when I turned red on meeting Miss Parmilye at your house; but if I was any redder than you were on this occasion, it is a wonder that I did not ignite and expire in a flame of spontaneous combustion."

"That is putting it strong, but I suppose I was red, for I felt red. The idea of a woman of her age claiming me for her husband! Why, she looked forty if a day."

"Nearer fifty, I would say. She was not much younger, I guess. But, the old gentleman with her explained it all; and she must be mad, truly."

"Yes, unless you have really been making a matrimonial venture—"

"Oh, bosh!"

They went on their way, still joking about their adventure, and finally came to their destination.

Their destination was the reading-room of one of the clubs.

Only a little while had they been there when they were joined by Dr. Gonda Gonsalvo, who greeted them cheerily.

"You are on time, I see," he observed.

It was apparent that they had some engagement on hand.

"Yes, but we came near not being," answered young Blackwall.

"Why, how was that?" the doctor asked.

"Why," Cambeth hastened to explain, "Waldemar's wife met him and came near carrying him off."

"Waldemar's wife!" and the doctor looked at them both in surprise.

They had to laugh.

"Yes, Waldemar's wife," Cambeth confirmed.

"At any rate the lady claimed him as her husband. As she was about fifty years old, however, Wald would not own her."

Dr. Gonsalvo was interested.

"What are you talking about?" he demanded. "One would think that you have become suddenly *non compos*."

"I will tell you about it," Waldemar offered.

"We were coming down the street just now when our attention was drawn to a carriage from which a lady was trying to escape, as it looked. So it proved, too. She did escape, and greatly to our surprise she made straight for us. We moved to get out of her way, but she ran right up to me, threw her arms around me, and cried out—'Oh! my husband, my husband!'"

Again both fellows laughed, but the doctor's face was serious.

"That was rather a strange adventure," he observed. "What sort of escapade have you been guilty of now, Waldemar?"

"None that I am aware of," the young man answered.

"You say the woman was about fifty years old?"

"About that, I should say," Cambeth confirmed.

"Well, it was peculiar, certainly. Did the woman say anything more? Did she call you by name?"

"Of course not," Waldemar snapped. "How could she, when she had never seen me before in her life?"

The doctor smiled.

"Do not imagine that I think there is anything in it," he assured; "I am always interested in anything of this kind. Of course I see that the woman must have been out of her mind."

"So it proved," confirmed Cambeth. "She was crazy."

"And she said nothing more?"

"What did she say, anyhow?" young Blackwall asked, turning to Cambeth. "I was so knocked out that I don't remember much about her words."

"Why," explained Cambeth, "she called you Henry, and demanded to know if you did not know her. 'Not my husband!' she exclaimed, or words to that effect; 'how can you deny me, Henry? Why do you disown me, after having done all else you can? Where are my children?' Such was about what she said, as near as I can remember."

"I guess that was about it," agreed young Blackwall. "It was bad enough, anyhow, and I lost no time in getting away from her."

"And there was an old gentleman with her who said she was crazy?"

"Yes. But, doctor, you seem to be greatly interested in the matter; do you want to hunt the woman up and help her to establish a case against me?"

The doctor was interested indeed. But he did not let it become known how much interested he really was. He smiled and responded:

"Well, no, I won't be as rough on you as that; I am interested in all such cases, as I said before. Let's hear the rest of it, and then we will let it drop."

"All right. There was another woman in the carriage besides the gentleman. She remained seated. He got out and took charge of the insane woman, telling us to get out of her sight as soon as we could, and he indicated that she was not right in mind. Of course we did not tarry there. That is about all of it."

"Did not learn the names of any of the parties, eh?"

"Not a name. But, come, let's be off."

"I am sorry to disappoint you," said the doctor, then, "but I came here to tell you that I cannot accompany you. I have an important call to attend to in half an hour. You rattled away so with your story that I had no time to mention this at first. I am sure you will excuse me, will you not?"

Both looked disappointed.

"Well, this is something of a dampener," declared Waldemar. "I do not know that either of us will care to go, now."

"Nonsense!" the doctor exclaimed; "you will never miss me. I am sorry, of course, and greatly disappointed; but you need not let my dropping out interfere with your pleasure. Go on, both of you, and enjoy yourselves."

"Is it really as you say, Doc?"

"Of course it is. Do you suppose I would disappoint myself for fun? I am not so cruel to myself as that. Yes, it is something that will not be put off."

"That being the case, we shall have to excuse you, of course. And as the time is running on we shall have to leave you."

A few other remarks were exchanged, and Waldemar and Cambeth hurried away from the club. Where they were going does not concern our story.

No sooner were they out of the room, however, than the doctor threw himself upon a chair and gave himself up to reflections.

"It was an easy way out of that engagement, anyhow," he thought. "Lucky that I heard their story before we had started, or I would have found it harder to have invented an excuse. I must now see Blackwall without delay. This will interest him. It must be that that crazy woman is here in the city."

"Yes, that seems clear to me," he went on in thought, "from what I know of the matter. I will go and lay the facts before Blackwall, anyhow. But if it was that woman, who was the old gentleman? It dawns upon me that that detective is bound to run himself into trouble, unless we get him out of the city soon. I must go to the bank."

After a few minutes he got up and went leisurely out, and in due time was at the bank.

Blackwall was there.

"Well, what's in the wind now?" the banker asked.

"I don't know," the doctor declared. "I have something to tell you, though, and then you can draw your own conclusions."

Dr. Gonsalvo went ahead then and laid the case before the banker as it was known to him.

"What do you think of it?" he demanded, when he had finished.

"I don't know what to think of it," was the response. "It looks as though it might be that woman, don't it?"

"From what I know about the case, it certainly does."

"But who was the old gentleman?"

"If I thought that detective capable of playing such a role, I would say it might have been he. As it is I do not know. Anyhow, if this was the woman, then it is certain that the detective has knowledge of the matter by this time. He is working in the interest of no one else, for there is no one else who can have any interest in the case."

"You are sound on that head. And accordingly we must take care of that detective."

"Yes, positively. Our insurance matter will not admit of our allowing any detectives to prowl around. He must get out of this city or die."

The words were hissed in a hoarse whisper.

"You are right. But will it be easy to get him out of the city? Will it be easy to turn him off on a false scent? I fancy not. I have tried it already, as we agreed upon the other time you were here. Griffit dropped him a note, but it seems that he did not bite, for I have learned that he was not out of town yet last night."

"It will not be easy for him to leave at a moment's notice, with a crazy woman on his hands."

"That is true. By the way, it is some satisfaction to know that that woman is still crazy. The word of an insane person will have little weight, if it comes to that, you know."

"It will never come to that. If necessary, both woman and detective can be put to sleep."

With these words the face of the doctor took on its demon-like expression.

"Can you have him come to your house to-night?"

"Perhaps I can, if I can fall in with him."

"Do so, and if you succeed, let me know and I will happen in on you. The rest of it can be carried out as you arranged."

"All right, I will do it. You shall have a chance to size him up at your own leisure."

"Do you imagine that he could discover anything if I put him on the track of Parmilye?"

"Yes, I do; he can run him to earth in a grave at Greenwood."

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, is that all he will be likely to learn? He will search the career of Parmilye closely, and bring to light everything he can."

"Let him. If you have told me the case as it is, there is little danger that he can learn much."

"You know the truth and all of it."

"Then let him go for Parmilye, since he is well out of the way, and what he will be able to learn will not set him crazy."

"Very well, let it be so. Get him into your house if you can, and let me be notified. We will hook horns with our great detective and see what there is in him. I fancy he will find that he has run up against a rock, eh?"

"He will find that he has struck a snag in me, that is sure," the doctor declared.

After a little while the doctor went away, the plan having been fully agreed upon. About an hour later Detective Kinworth entered the bank.

CHAPTER XXII.

A BOLD CHARGE MADE.

WHEN Kinworth got back to the hotel with his charge, the lady had so far recovered that she seemed none the worse for the excitement through which she had passed.

As soon as they were in her rooms the detective suggested that a cup of strong tea or coffee would be good to steady her nerves.

The latter was ordered, and in a little time the lady was herself once more.

Kinworth was well pleased, and greatly thankful that it had turned out so well as it had.

Now he had something substantial to work upon. Not only had he the names of Mrs. Abington's old companion, her father's housekeeper, and of her daughter; but now something else was to be looked into.

Why had Mrs. Milburn mistaken young Wildemar Blackwall for the mysterious Henry Abington?

That was something that he must now investigate, and he put strong reliance upon it. That, and the fact that Mancred Blackwall had recognized the ring, went as proof that Mancred Blackwall was in some way connected with the case.

The detective had waited in the sitting-room of Mrs. Milburn's suite while the ladies changed their attire and drank their coffee, and after awhile Mrs. Milburn joined him.

Kinworth was delighted to see her so refreshed.

"I am sorry that I have kept you waiting," she remarked, on entering. "Mrs. Ekyngs would insist upon my changing my dress immediately, and taking some coffee as you suggested. I guess I am myself once more, Mr. Armstrong."

"You are certainly none the worse for your adventures, and I congratulate you," the detective responded.

"Mrs. Ekyngs tells me that I have been out

of my mind, and that I have given you no end of trouble, to say nothing about having made myself ridiculous."

"You have been out of your mind, it is true; but the rest of it amounts to nothing, unless I say that it may prove of value to me. Do you feel able to talk a little about it?"

"Perfectly, sir, and anxious to do so. Where have we been? What have I done? What have you learned?"

Kinworth went over the ground at length, and related everything.

When he had done, Mrs. Milburn asked:

"Can you describe that young man to me?"

"I think I can, madam," was the answer.

"He was about twenty-five years of age, at a guess, quite good-looking and solidly built. Had black hair and eyes, and a neat black mustache."

"That description fits Henry Abington, as I once knew him."

"Hal! your memory is growing brighter, then?"

"I believe it is. I now recall something of our visit to the bank."

"What is it?"

"When we entered, a picture of everything as it used to be rushed upon me, and I saw my husband at his window just as I used to see him."

"And then you fainted."

"Yes, now I remember that I tried to speak his name, when a giddiness overcame me."

"What post did your husband hold in that bank?"

"I do not know that now. I know that his place was at a window just opposite the door."

"The cashier's window is opposite the door now, but the cashier is an elderly gentleman."

"Oh, I do not suppose that I really saw any one who reminded me of my husband; it was merely one of the memory-flashes, as we call them."

"I see. But this last was no such experience as that. You were really and actually living the past over again, to all intents and purposes, and what you did was done as you would have done it then under similar circumstances. You recognized a man as your husband. Of course he was not, being years too young, but he must resemble to a remarkable degree the person whom you mistook him for. This stands to reason."

"Yes, it does. I am surprised, sir, too, that you should let him go without learning who he was."

The detective smiled.

"Be assured that I would not have done so, madam, had I not known him already. I recognized him as soon as you did."

"You knew him! Who was he?"

"Before I tell you that, madam, I must exact a promise of you."

"What is it?"

"That you will take no action in this matter without consulting me," the detective named.

"I promise."

"Very well. I do this merely as a precautionary measure. The young man is the son of the Mancred Blackwall I have already mentioned to you."

"Mancred, Mancred," the lady said over after him, "that is the name that puzzles me most. I cannot bring it to mind at all. It is certain that the person who put me in the asylum was not my brother."

"And it is certain that it was your husband, I think," added the detective.

"I think you must be right."

"One or two points more, madam," said Kinworth, "and I will go. Do you now remember who Dorinda Snipes was?"

"Yes, yes, I remember now. That was the name of the middle-aged woman whom I have told you I have seen in some of my pictures of the past."

"She was your father's housekeeper. And now do you think you would know the name of your baby girl if you were to hear it?"

The woman was trembling and was greatly excited.

"I do not know," she answered; "it seems as if I have heard the name recently. It is just at the end of my tongue."

"Was it Essylt?"

"That was it! Now I remember it. Oh! I am so glad that this cloud is lifting, though slowly. Perhaps everything will soon be made clear."

"I think we are coming at the truth of it now," the detective encouraged. "I shall try to find Dorinda Snipes, if she is living. She may be able to tell us what we want to know."

Further remarks were made on both sides, but nothing of additional or new interest was brought out, and they may be passed.

When Kinworth left the room he went to his own, and some time later made his way out of the hotel in his own proper personage.

He went to the other hotel, visited his room there, and from there set out for the bank of Blackwall, Parmilye & Co., where he arrived about an hour after Dr. Gonsalvo had taken his leave.

Mr. Blackwall was taken a little aback when Griffit told him the detective was there, but he

braced himself for the interview and directed that he be admitted.

Kinworth entered about as on the former occasion, and the banker felt that he had nothing to fear in the encounter.

After their words of greeting had been exchanged, Kinworth stated his business briefly.

"When I was here before, Mr. Blackwall," he began, "you expressed your willingness to help me in any way that you could."

"I believe I did, sir."

The banker's response was spoken a little stiffly.

"I think you can help me now," the detective went on. "I want to ask you who wore this ring thirty years ago."

As he put the question he held up his left hand and showed the ring that the banker had noticed on the occasion of the other visit.

"How should I know?" was the calm counter-question.

"Then you never saw it before, eh?"

"Not unless I saw it on your hand when you were here before, sir. I believe you did have on a ring of some sort."

"This is the one. Let me tell you something of the history of this ring. I will not take much of your time."

"I hope you will not, for I am busy."

"This ring was an engagement-ring given by Henry Abington to Celeste Whitford, about thirty-one years ago. It bears the initials 'H. A. to C. W.' Henry Abington and Celeste Whitford were married July 30, 1854. Their first child was born June 5th, 1855. The second was born May 20th, 1858."

"I am not interested in these details, sir; if there is anything you want to know, ask your question."

"I will do so in a moment. About one year after the birth of the second child, Mrs. Abington was taken to California by her husband and put in an asylum. That was twenty-six years ago. She has been in San Francisco ever since. Now certain persons are interested in her case, and desire to learn what became of her children. Now without telling you any of the further particulars, I will simply state that I have reason to think that you can tell me something about Henry Abington and his children."

"I cannot imagine by what process of reasoning you arrive at that absurd conclusion," was the cool response.

"Then I will be a little more explicit. When I was in here the other day you recognized this ring."

The banker forced a laugh.

"Young man," he made answer, "you are the greatest ass to set yourself up as a detective that I ever met."

"Perhaps I am, *Henry Abington*," was the easy return, "but that is not to the point. What have you to say in explanation of the fact that that woman, Celeste Abington, still insane, to-day recognized your son on the street as her husband? Any one can see that he and you look very much alike, allowing for differences of ages. And how do you explain the fact that you were in the employ of Reuben Whitford, on Wall street, under the name of Henry Abington?"

The last question was a bluff of the boldest sort.

Blackwall's face grew pale slightly, and he became nervous, though he tried hard to remain cool and steady-nerved.

Kinworth noted everything.

"I do not attempt to explain any such nonsense, sir," he retorted, with all the sternness of tone he could command. "It is my opinion that you are out of your mind. I shall be obliged to you if you will take yourself out of my office."

The detective felt sure of his ground. It was seldom that he made a mistake.

"Very well, *Henry Abington*," he said, rising, "I will go. I will not stop now to ask you to explain what you were doing in San Francisco twenty-six years ago under the name of Henry Mancred. When next we meet I may be able to tell you much."

"Hold on, sir; a word with you," the banker called out, but the detective did not turn back.

"Now, sir," Kinworth mused, as he walked away, "let me see what you will do. If innocent, you will do one thing; if guilty, another."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ONE GREAT DISCOVERY.

HAVING made so bold a move, the detective had to follow it up with another before Blackwall could rally.

He went straight to the home of the banker. Arriving at the house, he asked to see Mrs. Blackwall, and was shown into the parlor.

"Mrs. Blackwall?" he politely asked, when the lady entered.

"I am she," was the response.

"I have just come from Mr. Blackwall," the detective explained. "Insurance business is over-exact, as I am sure you will say, but some questions have to be answered by the person to whom they are addressed, and none other. I will trouble you only a moment, madam."

"I will answer whatever you have to ask, I

assure you, so far as I can," said the lady, completely deceived.

Kinworth had uttered no untruth whatever, but Mrs. Blackwall immediately understood that he had been sent there by her husband.

"How long have you been married?" was the first question put.

"Twenty-five years," was the answer.

"Where were you married?"

"In New Orleans."

"Your husband came from California, did he not?"

"He did."

Kinworth was jotting down the answers in his note-book to give the impression that they were important, and to carry out the insurance deception.

"How long had Mr. Blackwall been a resident of New Orleans when you married him?" he next asked.

"About one year, sir," was the answer; and the lady added: "It seems strange that my husband could not answer these questions."

"I remarked that you would declare that insurance business is over-exact," the detective observed, smiling. "That is all, madam," he announced, as he rose, "and I am greatly obliged to you."

He bowed himself out of her presence, and was gone before she could recover from the state of surprise he had thrown her into.

"So much more proof piled up," he mused as he walked away. "It is dollars to cents that Blackwall is the man. Well, I will force his hand. When he learns that I have invaded his home, he will see that I mean business."

When he arrived at the hotel he found there a person awaiting him who was none other than Griffit, the head clerk of the Blackwall establishment.

"I want to see you in private, sir," Griffit said.

"Very well, sir, come right up to my room," the detective invited.

He led the way up, and when they were alone Griffit stated his business.

"I overheard your conversation with Mr. Blackwall to-day, sir, and I must tell you that you are on the wrong track altogether. He is no more the man you want than I am. Now in order to set you right, and to clear your suspicion away from him, I will tell you more than I did the other day."

"I shall be glad to hear what you have to say, sir," the detective humored.

"I know more about that matter than I told you the other day."

"I believe you in that."

"And what I am about to tell you is a secret. Mr. Blackwall may know it, and he may not. That I cannot say. The secret is this: The Henry Abington you were in search of was Mr. Sigbert Parmilye."

"Is it possible?"

"Not only possible, but true."

"And his children?"

"His daughter you have seen. The son I do not know anything about."

"You are sure of what you say?"

"I am sure of it. I would not tell you, but I see that you are making such a great blunder in suspecting Mr. Blackwall."

"Well, it will help me greatly to know this, sir," Kinworth remarked, "and I am greatly obliged to you for the service."

"You need not let Mr. Blackwall know that I have seen you, and that I have had anything to do with the matter."

"All right, friend Griffit, I will hold it secret."

The head clerk soon went away, and when the door closed behind him the detective laughed.

"They must take me for an ass, indeed," he mused. "But, they have given me a new thought, and I will profit by it."

He left the hotel by the rear way, was soon at the other where "Mr. Armstrong" was stopping, and in a little time he appeared on the street in that character.

He went to the late residence of Mr. Parmilye.

Mrs. Swann answered his ring, and he asked to see Miss Parmilye.

When the young lady entered the room into which he had been shown, he rose to greet her, saying:

"Of course you do not remember me as your father's friend. My name is Armstrong. I have called to see how you are situated, and to ask whether there is anything that I can do at this time."

This was said in a kind, fatherly way, and no offense could be taken, since he had announced himself as Mr. Parmilye's friend.

"I am greatly obliged to you, sir," Miss Parmilye answered, "but I do not know of anything you can do for me. Mr. Blackwall assures me that there is sufficient for me at the bank, transferred from father's name to mine, so I do not want for anything."

"I am glad to hear that. May I ask what your intention is for the future?"

"We, Mrs. Swann and I, are going to make our home with Mr. Blackwall's family, as it was papa's wish that I should do so."

Kinworth was interested in this.

"And your means will be sufficient for all future needs, I presume?"

In his disguise the detective could ask such questions.

"Yes, so I am assured by Mr. Blackwall."

"I am glad to hear that. And now you will pardon me if I ask a personal question or two. Did your father say anything to you before he died concerning something in his past life?"

Kinworth's sharp eyes saw that the young lady became interested in this immediately, and she grew slightly nervous.

"He did not," she answered.

"Nor anything concerning yourself?"

"N-no, sir."

"Well, let me put my question in a little different form; or rather change it a little in its nature. Do you know that there is some secret in connection with the past?"

Kinworth was on dangerous ground now, but he was feeling his way.

Miss Parmilye's increased agitation told him plainly that there was something of the kind there, that there was a skeleton in the closet somewhere. Her answer confirmed it.

"I am aware that there is some secret, but what the nature of it is I do not know," she said.

"Perhaps I may be able to enlighten you, then, though I cannot promise to do so immediately. How long has your housekeeper been with you?"

"Longer than I can remember, sir."

"Indeed! Will you call her in and introduce me to her? That is, if you have no objections to her hearing our conversation."

"No objections whatever, sir; in fact I shall be glad to have her present. She is like a mother to me."

"You do not remember your mother, then?"

"No, sir. I will call Mrs. Swann at once."

She stepped from the room, and the detective looked around him with interest. But there was nothing important for him to see. The room was nicely but not expensively furnished, and not unlike other rooms of its kind in the neighborhood.

In a few moments Miss Parmilye returned, Mrs. Swann with her, and the young lady introduced the detective under the name he had given.

"Perhaps you do not remember me, Mrs. Swann," Kinworth remarked, "for it is some years since I was in New York last. In fact, I do not remember you. But, no matter, I suppose a friend of the late Mr. Parmilye is welcome."

"Perfectly so, sir," the housekeeper assured.

"I have called to see if I could be of any assistance at this time, but I find that I cannot. I have just mentioned a matter of private interest to Miss— Pardon me, my daughter, but what is your first name? If I ever heard it I have forgotten it."

"My name is Essylt, sir," he was informed.

The reader can imagine the flush of satisfaction which the detective experienced at this announcement. It was the name Mrs. Milburn had spoken when calling for her child, during her fit of dream-like insanity in the room that had once been her own.

"I have just mentioned," he went on, addressing Mrs. Swann, "a matter of a private nature in which Miss Essylt has a deep interest. That is the matter of a secret which her father carried with him to the grave. I presume you do not know who your mother was, do you, my child?" turning back to Essylt.

"I do not," she answered, dropping her gaze to the floor, as the warm blood mounted into her face.

"Nor you, either, I presume," to Mrs. Swann.

"No, sir," she owned.

"Then I suppose it will remain for me to inform you. But I may not do so at this time. I will consider that. By the way, my child, did you speak to your father concerning it in his last hours?"

"Yes, sir, I did, and begged him to tell me all about it."

"And what did he say?"

"He said that it was better that I should never know. That to know it would make me unhappy. When I pressed him to tell me something of my mother, all he would say was that I was the issue of honorable wedlock."

"And he spoke the truth," Mr. Armstrong affirmed. "Your mother's name was— But perhaps I had better hold that until I can show you undoubted proof."

"No, no," earnestly, "tell me something now, I pray you."

"Well, on condition that you will not betray where you learned it, unless to Mr. Blackwall, I will."

"Oh! we promise that, sir!"

Mrs. Swann nodded to affirm the promise.

"Very well, I will tell you something, but not all. Your mother's name was Miss Celeste Whitford, of this city. Your parents were married July 30th, 1854. You were born May 20th, 1858. Now ask no questions, for I will say no more. I desire, on the contrary, to ask some of Mrs. Swann."

The two women could only look upon their strange visitor in blank amazement. Who could he be? What more did he know?

CHAPTER XXIV.

KINWORTH HAS HIS GRIP.

If the reader wonders at Kinworth's positive assertion regarding Miss Parmilye and the mystery of her birth, let him reflect that he was a professional detective, and that he had been giving the case long and careful study.

At last he knew that he was on the right track. The very means adopted by the banker to throw him off the trail had only served to place the case into his hands the more fully.

He was master of the situation now, and knew it. What the nature of his discovery was, remains to be seen.

"If there are any questions that I can answer, sir," said Mrs. Swann, "I will do so with pleasure."

"Thank you," returned the detective, "there are several points upon which I desire some information. Let me ask, first, how long have you known Mr. Parmilye?"

"I think it is something like twenty-six years," the woman answered.

"You have been his housekeeper during that time?"

"No. I have been acting as his housekeeper about twenty-two years."

"Ever since his return home, after he first put his children into your care, eh?"

"Yes."

"His children!" exclaimed Essylt; "have I brothers and sisters, then?"

"You had one brother, three years older than yourself," the woman confessed.

If there had been a shadow of doubt in the detective's mind, it was set aside now.

"A brother!" the young woman exclaimed; "where is he now?"

"I do not know."

"Is he dead?"

"I do not know whether he is or not."

Miss Parmilye was greatly excited over the revelations which were being made concerning the hidden things of the past.

"You never told me of this before," she complained.

"It was because your father did not want you to know it," was the explanation Mrs. Swann gave.

"What was that boy's name?" Kinworth now asked.

"I cannot recall it," said the housekeeper. "It was an odd name, and it has escaped my memory."

"That is too bad, for I hoped that you would be able to give it to me. Well, no matter. You say that Mr. Parmilye placed both children in your care about twenty-six years ago."

"Yes, sir."

"What became of the boy?"

"He got lost on the street, and has never been seen since."

"That is peculiar. Tell me the particulars of it, please."

"There is little else to tell. It happened about three years after the children were placed under my care. The little fellow was then seven years old. He used to play in front of the house, and one day he wandered away and has never been seen since. When Mr. Parmilye returned, a year later, he tried to find him, but failed."

"And later, you say, he did not want Miss Essylt to know that she had a brother."

"Such was his wish, sir."

"That is very strange, to say the least. But, then, Parmilye was a peculiar man."

"Indeed he was, sir."

"In what way do you mean that he was peculiar?"

"Well, in almost every way. Why, he did not sleep at home more than once or twice a month. He had some sort of an office downtown, and most of his time was spent there, when he was in the city at all; but he was mostly off somewhere traveling."

"Oh, yes, he was very eccentric in his habits, and unlike most men in every way. So, the boy was never heard of again?"

"Never."

"Did Parmilye ever express anxiety about the boy?"

"He did at first, but not after a year or two."

"I thought you knew all about these things," Miss Parmilye shrewdly observed.

"No, not all about them," the detective returned. "Otherwise I would not ask Mrs. Swann the questions. I know nothing about the boy. I want to find what became of him, if I can, however."

"Being a friend of papa's, I should think you would have learned from him all that he could tell."

Kinworth saw that the young lady was keen.

"Your father was a most peculiar and eccentric man, my child," he responded, "and one who had little to say to any of his friends. It need not surprise you that I know but little more about him than Mrs. Swann. Perhaps I do not know as much about him as she does."

"I know nothing about him," the housekeeper declared. "That is, no more than you have heard."

"By the way," the detective next asked, "was Mr. Blackwall in the habit of coming here to see Mr. Parmilye?"

"No, sir. I do not remember that he was ever here more than twice. He came to see Mr. Parmilye, but did not find him at home on either occasion."

"Thank you. Well, I will not trouble you with any more questions. I must go. But allow me to say, Miss Parmilye, that if you need a friend, do not hesitate to command my service. Here is my card—Mr. Armstrong, — Hotel."

In giving his card, he knew that the knowledge of his identity was likely to become known to Mr. Blackwall, but he cared nothing for that now. He had other plans in view, and intended to have Mrs. Milburn and her companion remove to a private boarding-house.

Miss Parmilye took the card with thanks, but hastened to question:

"Will you not tell me more concerning the past, sir? What you have told me only makes me eager to know more."

"Not at this time, my child. After a little while, however, I will tell you everything, for of course it is your right to know it all."

"Then you will call upon us again soon?"

"Perhaps I shall. At any rate, I will not forget my promise."

"I hope you will not. With the information I now have, however, I can set to work to solve the rest of it myself. I can employ a detective to search out the whole mystery for me."

"That is true," Kinworth agreed. "But it will not be necessary," he added. "I shall be able to tell you everything within a few weeks, at most. Do not take any action until you hear from me."

"Very well, if you do not keep me waiting too long."

In a little while the detective took his leave and returned to the hotel.

"I thought her face was familiar to me, the first time I saw her, which was on the night of my arrival in the city," he mused. "But I could not think where I had seen such a face before. Now I know, for I can see that she greatly resembles her mother, Mrs. Milburn. There is not a shadow of doubt as to their relationship. What a meeting theirs will be, when I am ready for it!"

"This case is assuming big proportions," he further reflected, "and I must handle it with care. There is danger ahead. Blackwall greatly overreached himself in his last move, and now I have their game in my grasp. I must look out for that Doctor Gonsalvo, and I must have an interview with him."

When he reached the hotel he went to the rooms of Mrs. Milburn.

"I am glad to see you again," the lady greeted him. "What more have you learned in connection with the mystery?"

"I have found your daughter," the detective quietly informed.

"You have found my daughter!" the lady cried in great excitement.

"Yes. I have found the child, Essylt, whom you dimly remember as a baby."

"Where is she, sir? You must take me to her immediately. Oh! this news is too good to be true. Are you sure of what you say?"

"I am positive, madam. But, sit down and be calm, and I will tell you more about it. I cannot let you see your daughter yet, but in a short time you shall meet her. She is as anxious to find a mother as you are to find a child."

"But, who is she—where is she?"

"She is an educated and refined young woman, unmarried, and has some wealth. She lives alone with an old housekeeper. I can tell you no more now. In a short time I shall be able to bring everything out to your satisfaction. My work now must be to find your boy, if alive."

"Then it is uncertain whether he is living or dead?"

"Yes. But in a little while I hope to know the truth. Now, are you willing to bear the expense of having Doctor Hubbler come here from San Francisco?"

"I am willing to lay out my whole fortune, if necessary, to learn the truth of the past."

"May I telegraph for him in your name?"

"Yes."

"Good. And now one other thing. I would like for you and your friend to go away from here and take rooms in a private boarding-house. Your identity is likely to become known here, and you must keep out of danger. There is one person against whom we must fight who would let nothing stand in his way to defeat you."

"Why are we in danger here?"

"Because my identity is likely to be known, and through me yours would be discovered."

"I see. I am willing to follow your directions fully, sir."

"Very well. Here is a card. Rooms have been engaged for you at this place, and you will be expected to-night. It is strictly private and first-class."

"We will go there."

"And I will call upon you there to-morrow. Now I will go, as I have other matters to attend to. Should you want to communicate with me, use the same means that I have explained before."

Going to his own room, the detective changed

his attire, and half an hour later he was at the Hotel, without disguise.

After supper he was in the smoking-room, when Dr. Gonsalvo entered.

The dark-visaged doctor made straight for him.

"Glad to see you," he greeted, extending his hand. "I came here on purpose to find you, but was afraid that you would be out."

"What is on the carpet?" Kinworth asked, giving his hand.

"Why, there is to be some big playing at the Danae to-night, unless I am much mistaken, and I thought you would like to take it in. Will you go?"

Kinworth knew that there was something afoot, whatever it might be, and he was ready for it. As he wanted to talk with the doctor anyhow, it seemed that the game was playing into his hands.

"Yes, I will go, of course," he agreed.

"Very well, come home with me until I have seen a person whom I have an engagement with, and we will be off."

CHAPTER XXV.

BANKER BLACKWALL RESTLESS.

We must return to Banker Blackwall.

When the detective left his office, refusing to stop at his call, the banker shut the door with a bang and began to pace the floor.

"A thousand curses upon him!" he hissed. "How much does he know, and how much is he guessing at? He has called me Henry Abington to my teeth, and says that I was in San Francisco twenty-six years ago under the name of Henry Mancred. The fool! When I tell him that Sigbert Parmilye was the man he is after, then perhaps he will see his mistake. All that he can get out of a dead man he is welcome to."

He was in a rage, and paced the floor like a caged tiger.

"So, that woman is in the city, is she," he muttered. "Well, it is some satisfaction to know that she is still crazy, anyhow. But, who is working at the case in her interest? That is what puzzles me. By heavens! no disclosures must be made at this time. We are on the brink of ruin as it is, and this matter comes at the worst time. Curse the fellow! What business has he to drag my name into the mess? I will send Griffit to him with a good tale, and if he does not pay heed to that he shall die!"

He called Griffit to him, they held a conference, and the result of it has been shown in the visit of Griffit to the detective at his hotel.

When Griffit returned and reported, then the banker was more troubled than ever. In what way had the detective taken it? That could not be guessed. Griffit had reported that his manner was perfectly calm, and that while he showed interest, he did not display any excitement.

Blackwall repented of having sent him. Now he had placed the case in his hand to a certain extent. The detective had the word of Griffit for it that Essylt Parmilye was the daughter of Henry Abington. What use would he make of the information?

The banker felt that he had taken a rash step, but it was too late to recall it now. Whatever might come of it, the attention of the detective had been turned upon the dead Mr. Parmilye.

"I must see Gonsalvo," the banker muttered, "and that without delay. He can help me out of it if anybody can. If it is necessary, that detective shall die. It is that, or it is ruin for me; and I have no intention of being ruined at this time. Besides, that insurance business would send us both to prison!"

Complaining of not feeling well, the banker left the office earlier than usual and went home.

There another surprise awaited him. When his wife told of the man who had been there, and of the questions he had asked, he felt troubled indeed.

"I sent no such person here," he declared. "He is an impostor. If he comes here again hand him over to the police. He is prying around with the intention of robbing us, I have no doubt."

He did not tarry long, but soon set out for the residence of Dr. Gonsalvo.

He found the doctor in, and his face showed that dark-visaged individual that something had gone wrong.

"Well, what is up, that you look like this?" the doctor demanded.

"Let's get into your private den before we talk," the banker growled.

"Very well, come along."

They were soon in the back room with the skeletons and skulls, with the doors closed, and the doctor demanded:

"Now, then, let's hear from you."

"I will, and what I have to say may not be altogether to your liking," answered the banker. "That detective has got to be put out of the way immediately, or we are in danger of ruin and State's Prison."

The devil-look came into the doctor's face.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "Give me the whole thing at once."

"You had not been gone from the bank an hour when he came there."

"Well, and what followed that?"

The banker went ahead and told the whole thing, holding nothing back. If anything, he added to the strength of it all.

"I think we are both of the same mind," the doctor agreed. "He must be put out of the way, and that without delay. He has run far enough. We will attend to him this very night."

"A desperate disease demands desperate treatment," the banker observed. "It is strange how these things should come about, just at this time. A year ago we could have defied them all, and a year later the same; but now they have caught us in a bad time."

"Right you are. But we are equal to them all, I think. Whatever points are against us that detective holds, and as soon as his voice is stilled the case ends. The woman being insane, we have nothing to fear from her alone."

"So I look at it."

"Don't you think that I ought to have stuck my scalpel into Parmilye, for his blundering work in leaving clews of the kind he did behind him?"

"He deserved it, I agree with you," growled the banker. "He ought to have been kicked well."

"Have you anything to suggest?"

"No."

"Very well, then, come here at nine o'clock to-night and I will have something to show you, if I do not miss my guess."

"I will be here."

With that understanding they parted, and the banker returned home.

Essylt Parmilye was there, having come to see him.

"I have come here to ask you if you know what the secret of my father's life was," she demanded.

The banker was thunderstruck. Why this question from her, and at this time? What had she got hold of to bring her to him for information?

He recovered himself with an effort, and answered:

"In the first place, I do not know to what you refer; and next, I do not know any secret of your father's that I am aware of. Why do you come to me with such a question?"

He spoke kindly enough.

"Being his partner in business, I thought you might know more about him than any one else would be likely to, that is all. The secret to which I refer is that concerning the birth of myself and my brother."

Blackwall started now in earnest. He could not help showing it.

"Your brother!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"I never knew you had a brother."

"Nor did I until to-day, but it seems that I had."

"And where did you get the information? I never heard your father say anything about having more than one child, and that yourself."

"I understand that he kept it a secret, and that he did not want me to know of it."

"I presume the housekeeper has told you, then, as she was in your father's employ, and would be likely to know about it if anybody."

"Not so, sir. It was an old gentleman who said he was a friend of papa's. He called at the house to-day to see if he could be of any assistance to me at this time, and he was he who told me."

"What was his name?"

"Armstrong."

"I guess I never heard of him. Well, what did he tell you? I am as much interested in the matter as you are, and if I can help you to work it out I will gladly do so."

"I must tell you first that I never knew who my mother was. I asked papa on the night he died, but he would not tell me, saying that it was better that I should never know. Now this kind old gentleman has given me that much information, if no more; and I thought that perhaps you might know all about it and would tell me."

"As I said, I know nothing. But what have you learned? You have got me very much interested."

"Well he informed me that my mother's name was Celeste Whitford, and that she was married July 30th, 1854; that my brother was born—No, he did not give me the date of his birth. He said that I was born May 20th, 1858. That was all he told me, and you can see that it was quite enough to make me want to know more."

"So I should imagine. I was not aware that there was such a secret connected with you."

Your father never disclosed it to me. What did you say the old gentleman's name is, by the way?"

"His name is Mr. Armstrong, and he is at the Hotel. I considered it right that I should tell you about all this, as you are my friend."

"Perfectly right, my child, but if I were you I would not pry into the thing any further. I do not want to wound your feelings, but you know that where there is a family secret of this kind there is generally something back of it that is not pleasant. Perhaps you would be none the happier if you were to know it all."

"That does not matter Mr. Blackwall. It is

my right to know it, and know it I will. Of course you will be willing to help me if there is anything you can do to unravel it."

"Certainly, you can count on me for that."

"Thank you, sir. Mr. Armstrong has promised to tell me all in a short time, but if he fails to do so I intend to take the matter into my own hands for investigation."

Some further talk followed, and then the banker excused himself and left the house.

At the evening dinner-hour he was back again, and at the table joked with his son concerning the adventure he had had with the old lady who had claimed him for a husband.

No one outside of the family was present.

Waldemar took it all in good part, and it was soon passed, but the banker had obtained as good a description of the parties as the young man could give.

After dinner he left the house again, this time going to the Hotel.

"Is there a Mr. Armstrong stopping here?" he asked of the clerk.

"There was such a person here, sir," was the answer, "but he went away this evening, or rather late in the afternoon."

"And there were ladies with him?"

"No, sir."

"Humph! I thought there were. Where did he go to, do you know?"

"I think he said something about taking a train for the West."

"And the ladies—"

"Come to think about it, there were two ladies here with whom he was acquainted. They went away, too."

"Who were they? Sorry to trouble you, but it is important to me."

The clerk looked at the register, and answered: "They were Mrs. Morgan Milburn and lady companion, of San Francisco."

Uttering a low whistle, the banker started for the door.

"If that woman has got the Widow Milburn to back her," he muttered, when he reached the street, "we may as well give up the fight. Her pocketbook is longer than ours by several millions, I guess."

CHAPTER XXVI.

KINWORTH IN A TRAP.

DR. GONSALVO seemed in a lively mood as he and Kinworth set out from the hotel to go to the doctor's house.

The detective met him half-way, and if there was any suspicion in his mind, the doctor could never guess it.

As on a previous occasion when he had gone out with the doctor, the detective had nothing else to do for the time being.

He had telegraphed to San Francisco for Dr. Hubbler, and until he arrived he did not intend to take any further important steps.

Likewise, too, he had taken steps toward finding the woman, Dorinda Snipes, if living.

When they reached the doctor's house, and had entered, the doctor said:

"I will not treat you as a patient, and allow you to see only my office, nor yet as a mere caller, and allow you to see only the parlor, but I will take you right into my den, as I do my personal friends."

"Thank you," the detective acknowledged: "I appreciate the honor."

Their conversation on the way had been for the most part commonplace, and of little or no interest to our story.

The doctor led the way, and threw open the door of his private room, saying:

"Enter!"

Kinworth obeyed, and about the first things to catch his eyes were the skeleton sentinels and the skulls lying around.

"You have quite a chamber of horrors here," he observed.

The dark-visaged doctor laughed.

"Men of my calling usually have something of the sort around," he remarked. "I may be a little overloaded, but the skulls are good for paper-weights, if for nothing else. Sit down."

As he gave the invitation he waved his hand toward a big, easy-looking chair at one end of one of the tables.

Kinworth stepped over to it and sat down.

Instantly a surprising thing happened. There was a click, as the detective's body touched the seat of the chair, and several slender steel arms shot out and folded themselves over his legs and around his body.

He was in a trap!

But that was not quite all. Barely had the click been heard, when the detective's right arm straightened out and a cocked revolver was in his grasp.

Dr. Gonsalvo turned toward him instantly, with a smile of Satanic cunning upon his face, but at the sight of the revolver aimed straight at his head the smile faded into a ghastly grin and his face paled.

The detective had been too quick for the springs of the chair, even after the warning click had been heard. His suspicion of something wrong came with the click of the spring, and with the suspicion his revolver sprang to his hand—no other words can express the quickness of the movement that put it there.

His legs, his body, his left arm—all were bound securely by the steel arms, and only for his great dexterity his right arm would have shared the same fate.

For a second neither of the men spoke.

With an effort, however, the doctor recovered himself, and exclaimed:

"Confound my stupidity! I knew that chair was set, but it slipped my mind when I asked you to sit down. Ha, ha, ha! it is quite a joke, but rather a rough one on you. You see the chair is intended for patients whom I find it necessary to hold fast while they undergo treatment."

"Oh, it is all right," responded the detective, "and it caught me quite unprepared; but I thought I would show you how we use the revolver over on the Slope. Now if you were in earnest, and I were really in a trap, you see that your life would not be worth a cent."

"So it looks;" and in spite of all his efforts to remain cool, the doctor's face was still very pale. "But," he added, "it is all a mistake, and of course my life will not have to pay the forfeit. I will release you immediately."

"No harm done, but it was quite a surprise. Just undo the thing, and I will put away this shooter as soon as I can move enough to do so."

The doctor reached under the chair and pulled a lever that was there concealed, and Kinworth was released.

He put away his revolver at once.

"You will think that a strange reception, I am afraid," the doctor observed, "but I assure you again that it was all a mistake. I most humbly beg your pardon, sir."

"Do not mention it," the detective waved; "the best of us are likely to err. As long as it was not intended, there was no harm done."

"And what if it had been intended?" the doctor queried. "What if you had really been in the hands of some enemy?"

"In that case, sir, you would now be a dead man, or I would be free, just as I am," Kinworth coolly declared.

"Then I am thankful that I am not your enemy!" and the doctor laughed. "Here," he added, "take a cigar and smoke to steady your nerves. They must be a little shaky after that experience."

"Not a bit shaky, I assure you," was the return. "Thank you, but I do not desire to smoke now. You forget that we smoked as we came along."

As soon as released the detective had taken another chair, one in which there was no chance for further tricks of that kind, and his manner was the same as though nothing had happened.

Dr. Gonsalvo, on the other hand, was mentally cursing himself in his rage. It was his intention, as the reader must be aware, to trap the detective and dispose of him for good. His plan had failed. And now another scheme in the way of a drugged cigar had met with similar failure.

Twice the latter plan had failed, for he had tried to induce the detective to accept a cigar as they neared the house, when Kinworth had thrown away his.

It began to look as though the detective was not so slow after all, and that he had suspicions that all was not as it should be.

There was nothing for the doctor to do, however, but to make the best of it, and that he tried to do while his brain was busy trying to hatch up another means of attack.

They chatted for a little while, and Kinworth was about leading the conversation into a channel to suit himself when the doctor suddenly sprang up, exclaiming:

"There! I came near forgetting that! I have a preparation to put up for the person whom I am expecting every minute, and I must attend to it. Please excuse me."

"Certainly."

The doctor turned to a cupboard where he had a store of medicines, etc., and began to put up a mixture in a four-ounce bottle.

He talked as he worked, giving a fictive account of the ailment of the imaginary patient for whom the mixture was being made.

When he had done he stepped to the table and tapped the office-bell.

At the same instant there came a ring at the front door.

"Ha! that is the party now," the doctor observed.

The door was heard to open, presently, then the door of the front office, and a moment later the colored man-servant poked his head in at the door of the doctor's den and announced:

"Mistah Woolerton, sah."

That was the name the doctor had given the imaginary personage.

A word of explanation will not be out of place. When the doctor tapped the office-bell, it was a signal to his dinky servant that he should ring the door-bell and carry out his part of the deception.

"You will excuse me for a moment," the doctor requested, as he started to go out.

"Of course," Kinworth answered.

Gonsalvo left the room and closed the door.

This latter plan of action had been arranged between the doctor and his servant, to be

brought into operation in case the chair failed to work, or the detective by any chance did not sit down in it.

It will be seen that the demon doctor meant business in the work he had taken in hand.

But, how would he now trap his victim? That he had been studying upon, and at last had found the plan.

When he went out of the room and closed the door he motioned his servant to silence, and proceeded along the hall and entered the parlor office. There he began to talk, as though to some one, answering himself in a changed voice.

This deception he kept up for a few minutes, and presently moved across the floor to the doors which divided the two rooms from each other.

He looked through the keyhole.

The detective was sitting in the same place where he had left him, and was toying with one of the skulls which he had taken up from the table. He seemed to be paying no attention to anything else, but he was really on the alert for any attack that might be made from any quarter.

The doctor had had one sample of his adroitness with the revolver.

Evidently satisfied with the situation of his intended victim, the doctor retreated across the room, had further talk with his imaginary patient, and then the deception of the patient's taking his leave was carried out.

Gonsalvo returned to the rear room.

"I will be with you in a minute or two," he said, opening the door and looking in.

"All right, take your time about it," was the detective's response, as he looked up in a seemingly careless manner.

The doctor made the motion of drawing back and closing the door, but as he did so he tossed into the room the bottle containing the preparation he had lately put up.

He closed the door instantly.

It was closed none too soon, for in the same second there was an explosion in the room that sounded like the report of a rifle.

It was the bottle that had exploded.

This was a means of attack, it must be confessed, that the detective had not looked for. He was not prepared for anything of this kind.

Instantly the room was filled with a deadly gas, and even as Kinworth sprang to his feet he felt his senses leaving him.

He made an effort to reach the door, but before he had taken three steps he was overcome, and fell heavily to the floor.

He was in the power of his enemies, whose determination was that he should die. He had fallen into a trap after all.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A THRILLING SCENE.

"HA, ha, ha!" the demon doctor laughed, the moment the explosion took place, "let us see if you are quick enough to foil that agent."

He took his watch from his pocket and held it in his hand, watching the time.

When four minutes had elapsed he opened the door of the room and entered.

The gas had spent its deadly power, but he still took the precaution to hold his breath, and hurrying across the room threw open a window.

In a few moments the room was cleared, as the gas, having the greatest affinity for the pure air, rushed quickly out.

Detective Kinworth lay like one dead.

"Your race is run, my fine fellow," the doctor observed, pushing the body with his foot. "You will never know what has happened to you, and when you wake up in the next world you will wonder how you came there."

His face now had on its demon-like expression.

Calling to his servant, that sable fellow was soon with him.

"Golly!" he exclaimed, using the word that comes so handy to gentlemen of his color, "but you done that fine, doctah!"

"Not a word out of you, you black imp!" the doctor warned, giving him a look that fairly made him tremble. "You know that I could hand you over to the hangman to-morrow, so look to it that you hold your tongue well."

The ducky was a shade lighter, if possible.

"Nebber a word," he declared, solemnly. "Yo' needn't warn dis chile, doctah; I knows what am good for me."

"Well, see that you remember it; and stop that nigger-talk, or I will kill you, anyhow."

Whenever the ducky was frightened or excited he dropped into the broadest of negro dialect.

"What you want me to do?" he asked, now in a little better tongue.

"Open the trap-door there, go down and light the gas, and then help me to carry this fellow down," the doctor directed.

The servant sprang to obey, and the directions were soon carried out to the letter.

Pulling the table away from its position in the middle of the floor, and taking up a big rug on which it had stood, a trap-door was disclosed.

That being raised, a flight of steps was revealed that led to a room below.

When he had lighted the gas, the ducky returned, and the body of the detective was taken up and carried down into that room.

It was what was evidently a part of the cellar of the house walled off into a long, narrow compartment.

In the middle of the floor stood a dissecting-table, with lights over it so arranged that the light was reflected fully upon the table. On one side was a long, deep sink, with faucets above it supplying hot and cold water. There was a chair or two, a side-table for handy use, and in the further end of the narrow room was a door.

That door, it may be mentioned, opened upon a narrow tunnel that led to a trap in the sewer under the street.

When the detective was brought down into this hole, he was laid out on the dissecting-table.

"There, that will do," said the doctor. "You go up, and if I am wanted, let me know. If Mr. Blackwall comes, take him into the front room and not the rear room. Close the trap-door after you."

"Yes, sah."

The ducky mounted the steps and shut down the door, and the doctor turned to the body on the slab.

"Well, my fine subject," he said, half-aloud, "in ten minutes more you will begin to come to, I suppose, and I must guard against that. I will put you into a little sounder sleep for the present."

Taking hold of the body by the neck, he raised it to a sitting position and took off the coat and vest. As he did so he noted that the detective carried his revolvers in pockets in the lining of his coat, near the bottom and well in front. No wonder that he could get at them so handily.

When that was done, the doctor's next work was to rip open the right-hand sleeve of his victim's shirt, laying bare his arm.

That done, he took a hypodermic needle from among half a dozen others which he carried in a small pocket-case, and made an injection of some subtle drug.

"There," he muttered, "now you are good for hours. I will let you be as you are until I have exhibited you to Blackwall, and then—Well, I can make use of you as a subject, and you will go into the sewer piecemeal."

That hideous smile overspread his face as he uttered the words.

He was about to turn away when his attention was attracted to the man's bare arm, which he had thrown across the chest of the body.

There was a red streak on it from shoulder to wrist, looking like a line of blood, and at first sight the doctor took it to be a scar. Closer investigation, however, showed that the skin was perfect, and that it must be a birthmark.

The line was not large, being no bigger than ordinary wrapping-twine, and its course from shoulder to wrist was slightly irregular.

"Well, that is a curious mark, anyhow," the doctor mused. "Is it a birthmark? Or is it a line made with India ink? It does not greatly matter which, I guess."

Turning down the lights, he ascended the stairway to the room above, closed the door, and throwing himself into a chair, lighted a cigar, taking care not to use the one which he had prepared for the detective.

"Well, the game is bagged anyhow," he observed. "With this fellow out of the way, perhaps the coast will be clear. No suspicion can attach to me or Blackwall."

At nine o'clock there came a ring at the bell, and the servant announced Mr. Blackwall.

"Show him right in here," the doctor directed.

The banker entered, and his face bore an anxious look.

"How is it?" he asked, these being his first words.

"It is all right," the doctor assured; "the fly is in the web."

The banker breathed easier.

"How did it work?" he asked next, as he took a seat.

"It came near not working at all," the doctor confessed, "but I got my grip on him at last. You never saw a man so lightning handy with the revolver as he was."

"So handy with the revolver! Did it come to a fight?"

"Well, no, and I'm glad it didn't; for if he is as good on the shot as he is on the draw, it would have been all day with yours truly. You see that chair there?"

"Certainly."

"Well, just take notice how it works."

Saying that, the doctor stepped over to the chair and sat down in it.

Instantly the sharp click was heard, and the steel arms flew out and imprisoned him in their embrace.

The banker looked on in open-mouthed amazement.

"You see how quickly that was done," observed the doctor.

"Yes; it was done in a wink. And what a devil you are, to have such things in your den."

The doctor smiled as though he considered that a compliment.

"Well," he explained, "quick as this chair works, that detective's arm worked quicker, for no sooner had he heard the click than his right

arm straightened out with a cocked revolver in his fist. How he did it I do not know."

"Wonderful."

"You see he had the bulge on me in the worst kind of way. I had to apologize, tell him that it was all a mistake, and set him free. And, by the way, you may as well set me free. Just reach under the chair and pull that lever."

The banker complied and the doctor was freed.

"How did you trap him, then?" Blackwall asked.

"Why, I brought my knowledge of chemistry into play and exploded a poisonous gas that rendered him insensible."

"Good! But, where is he now?"

"Come along and I will show you. I told you that I would show you something if you would come here at nine o'clock."

The doctor lifted the trap-door and descended the stair, the banker following close behind him.

When they reached the bottom and Blackwall caught sight of the body on the slab, a shudder ran through him.

The doctor turned up the light, and remarked:

"There he is, sir, and as fine a subject as was ever put under the knife. I promise myself a rare treat when I come to carve him up."

Again the banker shuddered.

"What if you are discovered?" he gasped.

The doctor laughed.

"What if I am?" he repeated. "I am a doctor, and if I am found dissecting a dead man what will it amount to? That is a part of my trade. But, I will not be discovered, so you need not let that thought worry you for a moment. By the way, here is his coat. Just see how handy he carried his weapons."

The coat was on the side-table, and the doctor took it up and displayed the two pockets with the revolvers in them.

"I tell you he would be an ugly customer to tackle," he observed. "Just look at that arm, will you; it is the arm of a Hercules."

The banker, whose face was now deadly pale, looked at the bare arm of the man on the table, and as he did so he sprang forward, his eyes seemed to bulge from their sockets, and he gasped—

"My God!"

"What is it?" the doctor demanded, excitedly.

"Oh! this is horrible—horrible!" Blackwall cried, pressing his hands to his head.

"What is horrible?" Gonsalvo demanded fiercely. "Have you taken leave of your senses? What are you talking about, anyhow?"

For answer the banker turned to the side-table, snatched one of the revolvers from the pocket of the detective's coat, and leveling it at the doctor's breast, cried:

"Dr. Gonsalvo, restore that young man to life, or I will send a bullet into your heart!"

The doctor reeled back as though he had been struck.

"What are you thinking about?" he gasped. "To do such a thing would mean ruin for us both. I will not do it!"

"You will do it, or I will kill you where you stand."

"It is too late; he is already—"

"You lie! curse you, you lie!" the banker almost screamed. "It is in your power to restore him, and unless you do so immediately I swear that I will plant this bullet into your heart!"

It was an awful tableau. The unconscious detective lying on the dissecting slab; the doctor standing partly over him with his scalpel in hand; the banker leaning forward with the cocked revolver aimed straight at the doctor's heart. How would it terminate?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AND STILL ANOTHER.

THE doctor was the first to speak, after some moments of silence.

"Are you in earnest—do you mean what you say?" he gasped.

"I am in deadly earnest," the banker assured, "as you will find to your hurt if you do not obey me. What do you mean to do?"

Blackwall's face was still pale, but now he was cool and determined in what he said.

"Have you taken leave of your senses?" the doctor parleyed.

"No, I have not," was the assurance.

"Well, do you not know that it will be ruin for us to let this detective go, now that we have gone so far?"

"I do not care whether it is or not; he shall not die!"

"Then you prefer ruin and State's Prison? Remember where we stand. What is one man's life to us at such a time? Self-preservation is the first law of Nature, you know. He must die, Mr. Blackwall."

"And I say that he shall not die! Now if you do not restore him at once I will kill you, that I most solemnly swear."

There was that in the banker's words and manner that made the doctor cringe with fear. He saw that the man fully meant what he said. But to restore the detective and set him free meant complete overthrow and ruin.

"Do not be rash, Mr. Blackwall," he said, "but let us reason this thing a little. You were as much in favor of putting the man out of the way as I was. Why have you turned about in this manner after the work is as good as done?"

"Because I refuse to be a party to the crime," was the answer. "It is too horrible, now that I see the victim stretched out before us."

"Chicken-heart! And is that your only reason?"

"That is reason enough."

"Has that red mark on his arm anything to do with it?"

"What red mark?"

"Do you mean to tell me that you have not observed that red mark on his arm? I thought it was that that startled you so. Look at it."

The doctor moved the detective's arm so that the mark was more plainly visible to the banker's gaze.

"That is nothing," Blackwall made response. "I was horrified at the thought of taking the life of a young man right in the glory of youth, and one with such a splendid physique."

"Bah! that is all sentimentality. What need it matter to us whether he be old or young? And, too, the deed is done. He is unconscious, and, as far as he is concerned, dead already. If I were to cut his throat he would feel nothing of it. To all intents and purposes he is dead."

"Doctor Gonsalvo, will you obey me in this, or do you prefer to die? We have had parley enough."

The revolver was still presented at the doctor's breast, and the banker's manner was none the less determined.

"But how are we to protect ourselves?" Gonsalvo persisted. "Can't you realize the position we will be in?"

"I realize it all, but I am determined."

"Man, you are a fool!"

"Call me so if you like, but that does not alter the case any. And now for the last time—will you bring that young man back to life? It is either that, or it is death for you. You will never leave this hole alive."

If possible, the banker's manner was more determined than ever, and the doctor saw that it was dangerous to delay longer.

The banker's action was a disagreeable surprise.

"Well, if you insist upon it, I suppose I will have to humor you," Gonsalvo said, "but I do it against my sense and against my will. It makes it necessary for me to get out of sight."

"That will do no harm. You can hide until the affair blows over," observed Blackwall, "and then you can come to light again."

"But, what of yourself?"

"You forget that he does not know that I have had anything to do with the matter at all."

"He will know it, though, if I find that I am getting into trouble, sir."

"You would expose it all, then?"

"As sure as the sun. If you are not willing to take part in this means of securing our safety, then you shall share the results with me, whatever they are. But, you surely cannot be so foolish as to let this man go, with the knowledge he has. Don't you see that it means certain ruin to all our plans, with State's Prison at the end?"

"I see all that, but I care nothing for it. If we can't shake this man off without murder, then we will bear the consequence. I will not be a party to his murder."

"Well, you need not be. You can leave here now, and I will attend to everything. You will know nothing about it."

"Gonsalvo, no more talk. Restore that man to consciousness, or die!"

The doctor realized that now the final moment had come. Did the banker really mean what he threatened? He dared not risk further delay.

"Well, I will do it, much as I hate to," he promised. "Put up your weapon. I will restore him if it is possible."

"If it is possible!" The words rung a warning into the banker's ears. The doctor might take means to insure the victim's death instead.

"Hark you, Doctor Gonsalvo," he warned, "if you fail to restore him, then you die, as surely as my finger can press this trigger. Do not attempt to play me false."

The doctor paled. He saw that the banker held the master-hand. There was nothing left for him to do but obey the orders.

"I will restore him," was the promise, "but I must go up to the office for the means of doing so."

"Go on: I will follow you."

The doctor turned and ascended the steps, Mr. Blackwall going right behind him, still retaining his hold upon the revolver.

When they reached the room above, the doctor went to the cupboard where he had his store of medicines, etc., and threw open the doors.

"Sit down," he said, "for it will take me some minutes to prepare the necessary article."

The banker took a seat, but still kept the revolver to the fore.

Gonsalvo was busy for some ten minutes, but finally he seemed to be about done with his preparations.

"Will you touch that bell and summon my servant?" he presently requested, half-turning around.

Blackwall reached over to comply, when, quick as thought, the doctor wheeled and discharged the contents of a large syringe full in his face.

The banker half started up, gasping for breath, reeled backward, and the next instant fell over the chair and landed unconscious upon the floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!" the demon doctor laughed aloud, "who can overreach me? I am more than a match for them all. Now I can think over this matter at my leisure."

He threw himself upon a chair and gave himself up to reflections.

"What am I to do with them?" he questioned. "Shall I dispose of both? But, that would never do, for the scheme cannot go on without Blackwall now that Parmilye is disposed of. No, the banker must live."

"But what of the other? What is Blackwall's object in sparing him? And how am I to do it anyhow, without getting into trouble? Let him get out of our hands now, and within twenty-four hours we shall be arrested. How can it be done, and yet without bringing the calamity of failure down upon us?"

For a long time he remained in thought, but finally roused up.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "I have it. That explosion was an accident, of course. I can play that excuse upon him, I think. Now to bring Blackwall to his senses."

Lifting the banker from the floor he placed him in the chair, put a few drops of some sort of medicine into his mouth, and set to rubbing his hands.

In a little time the banker opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he gasped.

"You are right here. And all safe and sound," answered the doctor.

"But—I—what has happened? What— Oh! now I remember. Where is he? Have you killed him? you son of Satan!"

"No, I have not killed him," the doctor assured; "he is all right. But I have shown you that I am the wrong man for you to try to bully and order about. You have been unconscious for fully ten minutes, and right in my power. I could have killed you as easily as not."

"But did not dare to, eh?"

"Did not want to. I have been thinking this matter over calmly, trying to find some means of sparing that fellow's life, since you are so bent upon it; and at the same time keeping out of trouble myself."

"Well, have you succeeded?"

"I have."

"What is your plan?"

Mr. Blackwall was himself again, but the revolver had changed hands. It was now in the possession of the dark-visaged doctor.

"In the first place, sir, you must take your leave, for of course you do not want the man to see you when he comes to—"

"I will do nothing of the kind, sir. I will not leave this house until I see that detective leave it alive and well. You shall have no chance to play a trick on me. You can let me hide in a closet."

"Have I not had all the chances that I could wish for to play a trick on you, as you call it?"

"Perhaps you have done it—"

He did not finish, but started for the trap-door, to assure himself that the body of the detective had not been tampered with.

"Stop!" Gonsalvo ordered, leveling the revolver at him. "I assure you that the man is just where we left him, and in just the same condition. I am willing to do what you desire. You can go into that closet yonder, and I will bring the fellow up to this room and restore him where you can see it all."

"You mean that?"

"I do."

"Understand, Doctor Gonsalvo, if you fail your life shall pay the penalty. Before I would let harm come to that young man, I would lay down my own life."

"Your action in the matter is a mystery to me, Mr. Blackwall, but you can rely upon my word. I will restore him, and you will hear me tell him that the explosion of gas that rendered him insensible was purely an accident. You will see me treat him like a gentleman, and my acting will be so real that you will believe it yourself, almost. You will see him go from the house as well as he entered it, and—"

"Excuse me, gentlemen, but you need not put yourselves to all that trouble on my account."

The rascals turned quickly, only to find themselves covered with a revolver in the hand of Lightning-Flash himself.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A NEW SUSPICION AROUSED.

A MORE complete surprise it is hard to imagine.

Dr. Gonsalvo made a move as though to raise the revolver which he had in hand, but the detective checked him.

"Hold on, there!" Kinworth ordered; "if you lift your arm an inch higher, I will put a hole

in you! I am in no mood for fooling. Lay that weapon on the table."

The doctor obeyed.

"And now sit down there," the detective further directed, pointing to a chair beside the one the banker occupied.

Blackwall was pale, and his hands and face twitched nervously. As for the doctor, a look of sullen hatred was in his eyes.

How the detective had come to, he could not guess. He could have staked his life that he would remain unconscious for hours.

The truth was, he had made a simple mistake in using the wrong hypodermic needle, and the wrong drug had been administered. Instead of rendering him more insensible, if such a term be admissible, he had given an impetus to his return to consciousness and vigor.

When he came to, the detective looked around him in surprise. Where was he? What had happened? In a moment he remembered all, and the sound of voices drew his attention.

He slid noiselessly from the table to the floor, looked around for his coat, found it on the side-table, and felt for his weapons.

Only one revolver was there, and he took that in hand and listened.

"Understand, Doctor Gonsalvo," he heard a voice saying, "if you fail your life shall pay the penalty. Before I would let harm come to that young man, I would lay down my own life."

Kinworth recognized the voice of Mr. Blackwall.

The doctor responded to that, and while he was speaking the detective put on his vest and coat and crept noiselessly up the stair.

When he reached the top he interrupted in the manner shown.

"As I said before," he repeated, when the doctor had taken a seat as ordered, "you need not put yourselves to all that trouble on my account. I will take care of myself. I am quite surprised to see *you* here, Mr. Blackwall," he observed.

The banker had not recovered courage sufficient to respond.

"I am quite surprised, and yet I am not so very much surprised, either," the detective went on. "From what I have learned of both of you, nothing ought to surprise me."

While speaking, he had reached over and taken possession of his other revolver.

Dr. Gonsalvo was fairly gnashing his teeth in impotent rage. He saw now what his mistake had been. First, he realized now that he had made a mistake in not taking the life of the detective at once; and next, in the use of the wrong needle.

"That chair trick of yours, doctor," Kinworth next spoke, "was very good, but I was a little too quick for you there. I was rather on the lookout for something of the kind from the moment I entered your door. Your next move was better, and I freely confess that it was a surprise. It floored me. It was not necessary for me to ask what your intention was concerning me. You meant to take my life. Now, what course ought I to take in return?"

"You are entirely mistaken," the doctor denied; "trying to save your life is very different from trying to take it. If I had wanted to kill you, do you suppose that you would now be alive? Where did you find yourself when you came to? Let me give you the truth of the disagreeable affair. As I told you at the time, that matter of the spring-chair was purely an accident. You do not seem inclined to believe it so now, after this second accident; but it is so. Next, a bottle of highly poisonous stuff fell from that shelf when I closed the door, exploded, and you were rendered unconscious. If I had not taken the promptest kind of action, you would now be dead. I carried you down to my table, tore off your coat and vest, bared your arm, applied the proper antidote, and here you are."

Kinworth laughed.

"You are a champion liar," he carelessly returned. "What I heard of your conversation gives the lie to what you say. It was your purpose to kill me. Why you did not do so at once I do not know, but I am thankful that you did not."

"If you heard our conversation," the banker now spoke up, "you are aware that I was making every effort to save you."

"I heard your words, sir," the detective returned, "and your stand in the affair is rather peculiar. From what I know, I would think it more likely that you would be the accomplice, if not really the employer, of this doctor in removing me from the world."

"Nothing of the kind!" the banker exclaimed. "I happened in here, caught the doctor at his devilish work, and threatened to kill him if he did not restore you."

Gonsalvo laughed lightly.

"You are a fool, and as great a one as I have been," he said. "I was a fool for not playing my best card; you are a fool for trying to get out of your share of the responsibility. This man has now got the upper hand, and we have got to come to his terms. You can see that, I trust."

"That is where the matter stands now," remarked the detective, "and the best thing for both of you is to make a clean breast of it all."

"What terms are you willing to make with us?" the doctor asked.

"Your present position, sir," Kinworth answered, "is one in which you will be compelled to accept any terms that I offer. It is the same with you, Mr. Blackwall."

"Well, what terms do you offer, then?" the banker asked.

By this time both the banker and the doctor had got their wits together, and were prepared to fight.

"The terms I offer are these," Kinworth presented. "Give me the truth of the mystery of Henry Abington, answer what questions I ask, and I will make no charge of this attempt at murder against you."

"And if we refuse?" the doctor asked.

"In that case I will arrest you and push the charge to the worst."

"This is a disagreeable matter," observed the banker, "and the more so that it is all a sad mistake. There has been no attempt at murder—"

"That will do, sir," the detective interrupted. "There has been an attempt at murder. Do not deny it; it is of no use. Do you accept my terms?"

"In order to have the affair settled," the banker answered, "I will tell you everything."

"Very well, sir, go ahead."

It can be seen that Kinworth was playing with them, as it may be said. He did not want to arrest them, for the time was not ripe. He knew the whole secret now as well as Blackwall did, but it was not his purpose to let them see his hand.

"One thing I want to impress upon your mind at the start," the banker began, "and that is that you made a mighty big mistake when you called me Henry Abington. I am not that person. But I can tell you who was. Sigbert Parmilye and Henry Abington were one and the same."

"I have since learned that fact," said Kinworth.

"You have! From whom did you gain the information?"

"From your head clerk, Griffit."

"Ha! he told you, did he? Well, it is the truth. Henry Abington and Sigbert Parmilye were one and the same. Now, of course, one being dead both are dead."

"Of course. But this is not telling me the story."

"True. Well, Henry Abington, whose right name was Blackwall, was my brother. He was four years older than I. We were born in California. He came East when a young man, and was for some years in the employ of Reuben Whitford the banker. Having been obliged to leave home on account of crime, he used the assumed name of Henry Abington. He married the banker's daughter. His wife became insane when they had been married a few years, and he took her to California and put her in an asylum. He left the children here in New York. The officers of California got on his track, and he was obliged to make his escape. He went across the Pacific, and so on around the world. When he came to New York one of his children, the boy, was lost. He has never been heard of since. The daughter you have seen in the person of Essylt Parmilye. About that time I came to New York, having previously been in New Orleans, where I married; and falling in with my brother, we went into business under the firm name of Blackwall, Parmilye & Co. Now that is the whole story in a nutshell."

The detective had listened attentively.

"You aver that that is the whole truth of the matter, do you?" he said.

"I do, sir."

"Then why did you not tell me at first?"

"For the simple reason that I hoped to put you off. Knowing that you were from California, I knew that you must be after my brother. He was dead, of course; but his daughter lives, and I would shield her from the knowledge of the past."

"I see; and in order to do so, you thought it necessary to kill me. It was so important that you would not even let my life stand in your way, eh?"

"Have I not told you that there has been no attempt to kill you? If you will not take our word for it, we cannot help that."

"Do not take me for a fool, Mr. Blackwall; the doctor here has as good as admitted the truth of everything."

"Well, even supposing that there had been such an attempt," the banker compromised, "can you see no grounds for it? Look at my brother's daughter, as pure and innocent as an angel. Would I not take steps to keep the truth from her? And would I not do all in my power to protect the family name? That secret of the past is dead, and it shall remain dead. No one knows it all but me, and I will never reveal it."

"I am satisfied," declared the detective in a changed tone. "Now it is all clear. Since Sigbert Parmilye is dead, there is no use of my looking further. Now I can understand why you were so opposed to letting me get at the truth."

The banker's face brightened, and so did that of the doctor.

"And of course you will keep your word and let this unpleasant matter end right where it is?" the latter reminded.

"I am a man of my word, sir," the detective assured, "and I will make no complaint against either of you for this night's work. You assure me that it was all a series of accidents anyhow, and—"

"Of course it was!" exclaimed the doctor. "I am as much your friend as ever, sir, and I am sorry that it happened; but I assure you that—"

"Do not mention it," interrupted the detective. "We will let it rest. You will hear nothing further of it from me, and you need have no alarm. You cannot help owning that the case would have a serious aspect for both of you, were I to bring it up against you, but I will not do so. And now I will go. We have nothing further to say, I guess. Doctor Gonsalvo, please get up and conduct me out. I will take the precaution to keep my weapon in hand, so that no further accidents will happen."

Kinworth had assured himself that he had not been robbed of anything, had put on his hat, and was ready. The doctor obeyed his order, opened the door and conducted him to the street, and there the detective bade him a polite good-night.

He was well out of the trap, but as he walked away from the house he exclaimed to himself:

"Great heavens! can this suspicion be true? Is it possible that—"

He paused as though he did not dare breathe the thought.

CHAPTER XXX.

RUNAWAY AND RESCUE.

WHEN Dr. Gonsalvo returned to the room where Mr. Blackwall was, the two men looked at each other for fully a minute before either spoke.

The banker was the first to break the silence.

"What do you think?" he asked.

"I think that you are a most infernal driveling old idiot!" was the hot shot he got in answer.

"Thank you for the compliment," he rejoined. "I was not so idiotic, though, that I could not frame a story to throw him off the track, as you will have to admit."

"Pardon my words, Mr. Blackwall," the doctor apologized, "I was thinking of the man's being allowed to get away at all. I am still of the opinion that we ought to have killed him as we first intended doing. No knowing what will come of this now."

"Haven't we got his word that it shall end right where it is?"

"Bah! what does that amount to? You do not base anything upon that, do you? Would he not promise anything to get out of here?"

"He did not seem to be in any great danger, sir, toward the last. It seems to me that he had the advantage of the case."

"Well, even so, his word must not be taken. That will be worse than foolishness on our part."

"But, what of the story I told him. Will not that be likely to turn his attention away from us?"

"It was a good bit of acting on your part, that I must admit, and it was a good story, off-hand; but we do not know how much stock he takes in it. The more I see of that fellow the less I understand him. I don't know whether to consider him an ass altogether, or to suspect him of extraordinary shrewdness. It is possible that he is deeper than we have given him credit for."

"He certainly has us in a bad box if he does not mean to keep his word."

"That is what I say, and we must take steps to foil him. We must put no trust whatever in his promise. We must prepare to balk him."

"But how are we to do it?"

"Alibi."

"Ha! a good idea! But, how will we work it?"

"By losing no time about it. Here is my servant, who will swear to anything. He will say that I was out all the evening, and that no one called here. Then I can get a dozen friends to say that I was at such-and-such a place. Of course you can do the same."

"Right! I will go at once and see Griffit, and he will say that I was with him. Why, dast the fellow's impudence, we have the master-hand, after all!"

"Of course we have, if we are smart enough to use it. But there must be no more foolishness—or rather squeamishness—in the matter. If he comes in our way again, he must die!"

"Have you already forgotten what I told you? If you harm him I will harm you. I mean what I say. Let anything happen to him, and I will hold you responsible. If you value my friendship, pay heed to this warning."

"Mr. Blackwall, this is something that I cannot understand."

"It is not necessary that you should."

"But the idea of your saying that you would

lay down your life to protect his, that is away beyond me."

"So let it remain."

"Can't you explain it to me?"

"Don't trouble your head over it. But it is simple enough. You ought to see into it after what I have already told you. Sooner than be a murderer, I would be a suicide. Do you understand it now?"

"I know what you say, but such fine sentiments are too high for me. My vote would be in the other direction."

Their further conversation need not be recorded, as nothing new or especially interesting was brought out.

They soon left the house, and after proceeding a little way together, parted company. The banker went to the home of his head clerk, as he had declared his intention of doing, and the doctor went to the Dana's Donjon.

In the mean time Kinworth had gone on toward the hotel where he was staying.

The young detective was in a deep study. Something had come up in his mind that clearly was troubling him not a little.

"The more I think over this," he reflected, "the more it impresses me. What other way can I find of accounting for Blackwall's words? None, that is true. Either the suspicion is groundless, or it is full of import. Ought I to question Mrs. Milburn on this point? No, that would be useless, for her memory is not sufficiently recovered. I must put forth every effort to find that Dorinda Snipes. I hope that she is still alive."

What had he in mind?

"And what about that insurance business?" he muttered, half-aloud. "That is the rankest kind of an imposition, and ought to be nipped in the bud. But it must wait. I must take care of my own case first, and then I will put them onto the scent. But, if that other prove true—My God! but this is horrible. Better that the parties concerned were dead, almost. It cannot be true; and yet—Yes, it seems positive that it is. What am I to do? It is clear that I must go on and unravel the mystery, and if the worst comes the guilty must suffer."

What was he talking about, that he spoke thus?

"I believe that Blackwall has this night saved my life," he went on. "How can I think otherwise? That devil doctor had me in his power, and that he meant to kill me was positive enough. I am sure that Blackwall put him up to it, but I believe that he afterward interposed and saved me. What was his reason?"

His reflections were suddenly interrupted.

A carriage came tearing down the street at a terrific gait, the horses running wild, and as it neared him the team turned in upon the sidewalk and dashed their heads against a massive building, one of them dropping instantly to the ground with a broken neck.

The carriage toppled partly over, and would have fallen upon its side but for the support of a friendly lamp-post.

The driver lay insensible some distance away, and as the detective ran forward he heard a woman scream.

One of the horses was but little hurt, and was rearing and kicking furiously.

Kinworth caught it by the head, spoke to it in a commanding tone, and it soon became quiet and stood trembling. Others were upon the scene as soon as he, and the animal was soon unhitched.

Two or three men took hold of the carriage and righted it, and a person within opened the door.

It was a person whom the detective recognized instantly. It was none other than the rascal—Dugald Cambeth.

The eyes of the two men instantly met, and Cambeth's face turned deathly pale. He drew back and made a motion as though to shut the door.

Kinworth noted it all.

"Ha!" he thought, "he is up to something that he does not want me to know anything about."

There were two other persons in the carriage, one being a female.

Kinworth took hold of the door and pulled it all the way open, saying:

"You have had a very narrow escape, whoever you are; let us assist you out."

He did not let on that he had recognized Cambeth.

"We have a sick lady with us," that rascal announced, "and she has fainted away. Is there a drug-store near at hand?"

"Yes, sir, there is one right handy," the detective answered: "shall I assist you?"

Interested, and suspecting that all was not right, Kinworth took a closer look into the vehicle.

Doing so, he recognized the other man, who was Waldemar Blackwall. He also noted that a light shawl had been thrown over the head of their companion.

"What are you thinking about?" he demanded. "If the lady has fainted, why do you smother her with that shawl? You had better take it off."

"We do not need any assistance," Cambeth

snapped in response to the first question, "nor any advice either. If you will step out of the way, we will get out and help ourselves."

"Certainly, I will oblige you in that way;" and Kinworth drew back.

Young Blackwell, too, had recognized him, as he had noted, and had turned as pale as Cambeth.

Cambeth got out, pretending not to know the detective, and paying no further attention to him, and young Blackwell handed their companion out into his arms. Then he followed.

"It is only a little distance to the lady's home," Cambeth observed; "had we not better carry her there immediately?"

"I think we had," Waldemar agreed.

"If what you have said is true, that she has fainted from fright," Kinworth spoke up again, "you had better remove the shawl from over her face."

"That is so," supported an elderly gentleman, who stood near; "take the shawl off by all means. I am a doctor, and know what I am talking about."

"But there is danger that she will get cold," Cambeth still parleyed; "we can get her home in a very few minutes, if you will only make room for us."

Quite a crowd had by that time collected, and the two men were in a desperate strait. Kinworth was sure that something crooked was going on, but did not want to take too much upon himself. He was content with watching, but meant to know more about it before he let the fellows get out of sight.

"If you know what is good for you you will scatter," cried young Blackwall, as an idea struck him. "This woman has got the small-pox bad!"

Cambeth caught the cue instantly.

"We did not want to let it out," he supported, "but we are obliged to tell you for your own good."

About two-thirds of the crowd had business elsewhere suddenly, and set off; but not so Kinworth. He knew that Cambeth and young Blackwall were not the sort of men to be carrying small pox patients around the city.

"This is a very unlikely story," he observed. "I think there is something about this affair that will bear investigation."

As he spoke he took a step forward and tore the shawl away.

What was his surprise, then, to behold the face of Essylt Parmilye!

"Ha!" he exclaimed. "it is just as I thought; there is no small-pox about this lady. Further, I recognize her, and I openly charge these fellows with abducting her!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE RASCALS AT THE DANAE.

CAMBETH and young Blackwall had got themselves fairly into a trap, and they realized it.

Their "small-pox" story had been so awfully thin that now they had no ground to stand on.

"What have you to say?" demanded a policeman.

"I think that we are capable of attending to our own business without the interference of everybody," retorted Cambeth.

"But this gentleman charges you with abducting this young woman. What do you say to that?"

"It is a lie!" Cambeth cried. "You have no right to detain us here. Make way for us, so that we can take the lady home, or to the drug-store."

Just then Miss Parmilye opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she asked, looking around her in a terrified manner. "Why are you holding me— Oh! now I remember. Release me instantly, you villains! or it will be the worse for you! Waldemar Blackwall, I shall inform your father of this outrage."

Pale, trembling, thoroughly frightened, the two rascals placed the young lady upon her feet.

"Can I be of service to you, Miss Parmilye?" asked Kinworth, touching her arm to draw her attention.

She looked quickly around, and seeing who it was, exclaimed:

"Oh! Mr. Kinworth! thank Heaven you are here! Rescue me from these scoundrels, and take me back home."

"I will do so."

No sooner had Kinworth spoken to her than Cambeth and young Blackwall, taking advantage of the momentary diversion of attention, tried to sneak away.

The policemen, there being now three upon the spot, detained them.

"No you don't," they said.

"Shall we take these fellows in?" one of them now asked of Kinworth.

"No, let them go," the detective answered. "I know them, and can easily find them when wanted. Let them go."

"If the charge is true that they have abducted this lady," the officer protested, "they ought to be run in."

"It is true," declared Miss Parmilye, "but let them go. Mr. Kinworth must have a good reason for what he directs."

"Yes, it will be better to let them go for the

present," the detective insisted. "I can find them when I want them."

"You know this gentleman, then?" the officer further inquired of Essylt.

"Oh, yes, sir," the girl assured; "he is a friend whom I can trust."

"And if you will disperse the crowd," observed Kinworth, "I will take the lady home immediately."

Being allowed to go, the two fellows lost no time in making good their escape, and the policemen opened the way for Kinworth and his charge.

They, too, hastened from the scene.

"How fortunate that you were again on hand to lend me timely assistance!" the young lady exclaimed, as they hastened along.

"I am thankful that it happened so," the detective responded. "But, tell me how you came to be in their power, and what it all meant," he requested.

"It is soon told," was the prompt and willing return. "I was at home, when young Mr. Blackwall came to the house and asked for me. He said that his father desired to see me immediately, and had sent a carriage for me. Without a thought of suspicion, I caught up this light shawl and entered the carriage. I was already inside before I noticed that there was another person there. Waldemar got right in after me, and the carriage started off immediately. If I had seen that rascal Cambeth before I entered, I would have been suspicious. We had not gone far when he announced that it was all a clever ruse to trap me, and that he intended to make me his wife without delay. I was so frightened that I screamed, and then the horses started off on a wild run. The two rascals held me fast, one with his hand over my mouth, and so they continued to hold me till the crash came and the carriage toppled over. Then I screamed again, and that was all I knew until I came to and you spoke to me."

"The impudent, daring scoundrels!" Kinworth hotly exclaimed. "Is it possible that young Blackwall was a party to such a foul piece of business as that?"

"It is possible, for it is just as I have stated it to you. But he will have reason to repent it, for I shall inform his father without delay."

"What do you know about that man Cambeth?" the detective asked.

"I know nothing about him," was the answer. "He annoyed me that night on the train from Philadelphia, and I have since met him at Mr. Blackwall's house, where Waldemar had brought him. That is all, but it is clear that he is a thorough villain."

"Yes, that goes without saying; and young Blackwall is not far behind him. I am surprised at the young fellow's audacity."

"And so am I. Do you think I ought to have them arrested, or would it be better to let the matter drop?"

"I was about to ask a favor of you," the detective observed, in lieu of answer.

"A favor of me?" and Miss Parmilye looked at him in surprise.

"Yes, I was about to ask a favor."

"What is it?"

"I was about to request that you make no complaint against them, and that you let the affair pass without even mentioning it to Mr. Blackwall."

Essylt was greatly surprised.

"Why, what interest can you have in making such a request of me as that?" she wonderingly questioned. "What is your object?"

"I happen to know," Kinworth explained, "that there is a friend of yours, a Mr. Armstrong, interested in you, and that he is about to render you some sort of service. If you let this matter become more public than it is, it may interfere with his plans."

The young lady was still more surprised.

"You know Mr. Armstrong?" she exclaimed.

"I do," the detective assured.

"And he has told you something?"

The girl's face was flushed, and she put the question with nervous excitement.

"He has told me nothing," Kinworth assured, "but I happen to know that much. I would let the affair pass, as no serious harm has come to you, and say nothing about it."

Essylt drew a breath of relief. She was glad that her young friend did not know that there was a secret connected with her life. She felt more than a passing regard for him, since he had twice been of signal good service to her.

"Do you think Mr. Armstrong would like me to do as you request?" she asked.

"I think he would."

"Then I will say nothing about it. Is Mr. Armstrong a friend of yours, sir?"

"Yes, I so consider him," Kinworth answered. "He is a friend to any one in need of a friend, but a bitter foe to evil-doers. Whatever promises he may have made to you, Miss Parmilye, you can rely upon. He is a man of his word, if I may say nothing else about him."

"I am glad to be assured of that, though I had no doubt of it. He said that he had been a friend of my father's, so of course I trusted him."

"That being the case, there is all the more reason why you may trust him, I am sure; and—

But, let us turn here; it is a nearer way to your home."

"So it is! I was paying little attention to our direction. You know where I reside, then?"

"Yes; but that need not surprise you. The address was published with the notice of your father's death, you know."

"Yes, so it was."

Kinworth soon changed the subject, and they chatted on until they arrived at the lady's home, when, as soon as he had seen her safely entered, he turned and retraced his steps the way they had come.

In the mean time, bitterly cursing their luck, Cambeth and young Blackwall had hastened away from the scene of their accident and defeat.

"That fellow shall answer for this night's work," vowed Cambeth. "It is not the first time that he has put his nose into my business. He is the man who took her part on the boat night, as I told you about."

"Is that so? I never suspected that, though I noticed that you and he did not hitch well when you met him at the Danae."

"By the way, we had better go there."

"Yes, come on."

Cambeth was older than young Blackwall by several years, and if the younger man wanted to become a thoroughbred rascal he had a good tutor. In truth, he was on the right road to that point of distinction.

Since coming to the city Cambeth had won a small fortune from him at gambling, and young Blackwall was largely in debt to him besides.

Cambeth had been playing to gain a point. When he had the young man fairly in his power, then he laid a scheme before him and promised that if he would lend his assistance in carrying it out, he, on his part, would return the promissory notes the young man had been so foolish as to give him, and would call their standing account squared in full.

Young Blackwall took the bait eagerly.

As yet, then, Cambeth had not told who the person was that he desired to get into his power. He had simply stated that it was a young lady whom he had met on the train, and whose whereabouts he had ascertained. He wanted to marry her, honorably, he declared, but knew that he could never win her by fair means. He would have to abduct her, and make her his wife by force; after that, of course she would submit tamely to the inevitable, he argued.

When young Blackwall had given his promise, then Cambeth stated that the person in question was none other than Miss Parmilye.

In alarm, then, the younger man tried to back out, but Cambeth held him to the bargain he had made, and finally urged him on to the sticking point.

The arrangements were made in full, the services of a minister were spoken for, everything was made ready for a hasty flight to Philadelphia after the ceremony, and the two villains went for their victim in the manner shown.

It was their intention to put her partly under the influence of a powerful drug, one that had been obtained from Gonsalvo, but without his knowledge, of course, as to the identity of the intended victim.

It would no doubt have been carried out in full, but for the runaway and the timely interference of the detective.

It seemed that Providence had taken a hand in the game.

Little wonder, then, that Cambeth cursed his luck, and that he was in a desperate mood when the pair reached the Danae.

He went at once to the bar and dashed off a glass of champagne, young Blackwall doing the same, and then they turned to find seats.

As they did so their eyes fell upon Dr. Gonsalvo, who came toward them with a half-amused smile upon his dark face.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A FIGHT ON THE CARPET.

"WHY do I find you looking so blue?" the dark-visaged doctor cried, extending a hand to each. "Did your little scheme meet with failure?"

"It met with complete failure," Cambeth growled.

"How was that?"

"Oh, luck was against us, and it turned out bad. It would have been all right, if it had not been for that fellow, Kinworth."

"Kinworth!"

The doctor uttered the name in something of the surprise he felt at the mention of it.

"Yes, Kinworth—curse him!" Cambeth confirmed.

It may be mentioned again that Dr. Gonsalvo had no idea who the female in the case had been. Young Blackwall had posted Cambeth in regard to the doctor's having his mind set upon her with matrimonial intentions.

"How did he balk you? You see I am interested in the matter. When I gave you that drug I thought you would have a sure thing, if you got hold of your lady-love at all. But, then, the course of true love never did run smooth, you know. Ha, ha, ha!"

"It would have been a sure thing, as you say,

had it not been for that fellow; or, at any rate, if it had not been for an unforeseen accident."

"An accident, eh?"

"Yes. We got hold of the pretty one all right, but after we had her in the carriage the team ran away, smashed things up generally, and right at the place where it occurred that man Kinworth happened to be."

"Whew! but that was a muddy streak of luck, and no mistake. Of course the game is all up with you now."

"I don't give it up yet," was the dogged assurance; "I mean to have that little beauty for mine, or know the reason. Of course I expect some harder work now, as she will be as shy as a frightened bird."

"Undoubtedly. By the way, who is she, if you do not mind telling?"

"I had rather not disclose her identity, doctor. Of course you will not be offended."

"Of course not. But, what about the fellow? Have you a rival in him?"

"It will be a wonder if I don't have, now that he has befriended her—now that he has acted as her champion."

He had come near saying—"now that he has befriended her *twice*," but he checked himself in time. That might have given the doctor a suspicion as to who she was.

"And of course you will want to put him out of the way—that is, get him out of the field in some manner," the doctor suggested.

"I would put him out of the way in earnest, if I had the chance," the fellow uttered in a vengeful hiss.

"Love is a desperate disease," said the doctor, smiling, "and it sometimes requires desperate treatment. Were it my case I think I would take prompt steps toward nipping that fellow's chances right in the bud."

As he said this he was thinking of Miss Parmilye, as he remembered that Kinworth had already befriended her.

"We are in the same boat to a certain extent," he added.

"How is that?" inquired Cambeth, though he guessed what was coming.

"Why, it is no secret that I am as good as engaged to a certain young lady of this town, and this fellow Kinworth has already done her a service that she will not easily or soon forget, especially as he is so deuced good-looking. Not that I would think anything of it, you know, but my own hook isn't any too well caught."

Young Blackwall gave Cambeth a sly nudge.

"How will it do for us to join forces against him, and give him a ticket-of-leave?" suggested Cambeth.

"How is it to be done? Where can we induce him to go to, and how?" the doctor questioned, pretending not to know anything of the inner meaning of the fellow's words.

"Where can he be induced to go to?" Cambeth repeated; "why, to the great and unknown Hence, of course."

"Oh! Well, I'd rather be counted out of such a serious game as that. It is a little beyond my line of practice, you know."

"Yes; but a little of your poison—"

They were talking in low tones, but the doctor interrupted to caution:

"You had better be careful what you say. Walls have ears. No, I could not do anything for you in that line. If you were determined to do it, though, I might tell you of a certain person who would help you out, that is if you are prepared to come down handsomely."

"Who is it?" Cambeth asked. "It will do no harm to know such a person, that is sure."

"His name is—"

The name and address were given in a guarded whisper.

"Thanks," said Cambeth, "I may have occasion to visit him for help in some way, if not for that purpose."

"You will find him a handy man. I do not mind telling you that he supplies me with a subject now and then."

"Ho! that is how you come to know him, eh? I might mention your name by way of introduction."

"It would do no harm; but you want to bear in mind that I take no part in any such work as you have suggested. You want to leave my name out of that."

"Oh, that is understood."

The doctor was playing a deep game. If he could edge Cambeth on to kill the detective, it would be a good stroke of work for him, and Mr. Blackwall could not hold him responsible. It would clear the way, and their insurance scheme would bowl along merrily.

Little incidents sometimes turn the tide of affairs.

While they were talking, the main door of the salon opened and the Pacific Slope Detective walked in.

He looked around, and seeing the doctor, Cambeth and young Blackwall, crossed over to where they sat.

"We meet again in the same evening, it seems, doctor," he greeted when he came up. "I did not expect to find you here."

"Again?" the doctor interrogated, with a well-feigned manner of surprise; "I am not aware that we have met before this evening,

Mr. Kinworth. I am none the less glad to see you, though. Sit down."

Kinworth did so.

"You have a remarkably short memory, I am afraid," he observed good-naturedly. "You do not remember calling for me at the hotel, eh? Well, it does not matter; others who saw you might help your memory if necessary, perhaps. But, what matter? We meet this time, anyhow."

"Really your words puzzle me," the doctor insisted. "I certainly have not seen you until now, this evening. You are thinking of another occasion, surely."

"No matter whatever," the detective waived, "since the point will never be questioned. As I said, I am surprised to find you here. I did hope to find these two gentlemen here, however," and he turned for the first to Cambeth and young Blackwall, "and I have come here on purpose to give them a word of warning."

The two rascals turned a shade pale, and became uneasy.

"I want to give you both some words of warning and of advice as well," he went on, addressing them. "You, Waldemar Blackwall, if you know what is good for you, will shake the company of this man without delay, and carry yourself a little more straight. You have been guilty of a State's Prison offense this night, and you may consider yourself lucky that it is not to be brought up against you. You need not fear arrest—neither of you, for that matter; but it is not because you do not deserve it."

The detective was speaking in low tones, so that no one outside of their little group might hear.

Young Blackwall's face was burning red now, but that of Cambeth was decidedly white.

"As for you, Dugald Cambeth—if that is your name," the detective went on, turning to him, "you can consider yourself even more lucky. If that lady were to have you arrested on the charge of abduction, and appeared against you, it would go even harder with you. This is the second time that I have been fortunate enough to be on hand to protect her, and I warn you that it must be the last. Interfere with Miss Parmilye again at your peril!"

The rascal looked as though ready to faint. This was what he had dreaded—the mention of the young lady's name in the presence of Gonsalvo.

"Miss Parmilye!" the doctor exclaimed; "do you mean to say that it was she that he tried to abduct?"

"That he *did* abduct—yes," Kinworth affirmed. "And while I am about it," he added, "I may as well add a word for your benefit, too: You told me that the lady in question was as good as engaged to you. You told me a lie. On the contrary she holds you in actual dislike. Knowing what I know and what she does not know, I warn you to cease your attentions there at once."

Dr. Gonsalvo almost gasped for breath. Not a word had been spoken loud enough to draw attention, and yet many eyes were upon the group. It could be seen that something was wrong. The red face of young Blackwall, the blanched countenance of Cambeth, and now the demon-like expression on the doctor's face—As for the latter, he wanted to tear both Cambeth and the detective limb from trunk.

"Wh-what do you mean?" he demanded sharply. "By what right do you set yourself up as that lady's champion? By heavens, sir, you had better have a care, or you may have cause to regret it!"

This was in a louder tone, and those around saw that there was indeed bad blood rising.

"You will find that I have a deeper interest in that lady than you are aware of," the detective returned in his same quiet, calm tone.

"And you will find that if you interfere with me and my business," the doctor grated, "that it will be the worse for you. You will find yourself in a worse fix than you were—"

"This evening, eh?" the detective finished. "You might as well say it right out. But, there is no need for a scene here. You have heard my words, and you had better heed them. I will go, for I see that your looks, words and actions are drawing attention."

As he said this the detective rose to go, but ere he had quite got to his feet he received a heavy blow in the shoulder from Cambeth. It was quick and unlooked-for, and Kinworth staggered back.

Cambeth had considered well his action. He knew that he would have the support of Gonsalvo for the time being, even though he might be called to account by him later on.

He was not mistaken. No sooner did the doctor take in the situation than he aimed another blow, Cambeth following instantly with a third. But their blows fell short of the mark, and in the same instant both men went gracefully over upon their backs, the fists of Lightning-Flash having been planted with telling force upon their breasts.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MRS. MILBURN MISSING.

Now the Danaë's Donjon, like other places of

its kind, kept on hand two or three professional "bouncers," whose business was to nip right in the bud any kind of disturbance that might arise.

There were two such present on this occasion, and they made straight for the Pacific Slope Detective.

Dr. Gonsalvo and young Blackwall were well known there, while the detective was a stranger, and naturally they set upon him.

But they both met with a surprise they had not counted on.

Kinworth brushed them aside with his powerful arms, not striking them, and the next instant he had his revolvers in hand and his back against the wall.

"Hold on," he cried, "there is no need of trouble here unless you force it. I acted only in self-defense in knocking those two fellows down. Stand back, gentlemen, till you understand this thing."

"But we don't 'low no disturbance in here," one of the "bouncers" growled, "so you jest hand over them weepins or we'll have ter take 'em away frum ye. You have got to git out o' here."

The detective smiled.

"I have no desire to make any disturbance," he said, "but you do not suppose that I would sit with my hands folded while those fellows 'jumped' me, do you? I am not built that way. Now, if you want to stop the trouble, just take care of them and you will have no trouble with me."

"That ain't the thing!" the other bouncer chimed in. "It was you that made the fuss, and it is you that must git out. Now put them things right up afore we git at ye."

By this time Gonsalvo and Cambeth were upon their feet, and the attention of the whole room was upon the detective and them.

The superintendent of the place, too, came forward.

"What is all this about?" he demanded. "We allow no such work in here, young man," addressing the detective; "put up those weapons immediately."

"I will do so, if you will see that I am not set upon," agreed Kinworth, in a calm and easy tone.

"Well, put 'em up."

The revolvers disappeared instantly, and the detective's arms were folded.

No sooner were the weapons out of sight, though, than the two peacemakers of the den sprung forward, and the superintendent did not interfere to stop them. He did not keep the word he had tacitly given. Instead, he smiled as though gloating over a point so easily gained.

But his smile was of short duration. The detective's arms unfolded, and the cocked revolvers were again in his hands.

The two bouncers were brought up with the weapons staring them in the face at close range, and they fell back as though they had been shot.

"What do you mean by such work as that?" demanded the superintendent in hot rage.

"That is the way I deal with men who do not keep their word," was the cool response. "I inferred that you would see that I was not set upon while this affair was being explained, but no sooner did my weapons disappear than your men were at my throat. Now you will stand back, all of you."

Dr. Gonsalvo looked upon the young detective with something of fear. He had seen revolvers handled, but never as this man handled them. They simply appeared and disappeared, as though by the most wonderful sleight-of-hand.

Others looked upon him with admiration. His very coolness won their regard and respect.

"You had better hear what the young man has to say for himself, Van," one man observed, speaking to the superintendent.

"Well, what have you got to say?" was the surly demand.

"I have only this to say," spoke Kinworth, "that I do not desire trouble any more than you do, and will not make any unless I have to do so to defend myself. In that case you may be sure there will be trouble for somebody. I am not a braggart, but mean pure business. Those two men struck at me and I struck back. I am in the habit of doing that."

"Why did they strike you?" the superintendent asked.

"They can best answer that question, sir."

"We attempted to punish him for his insults," explained Doctor Gonsalvo. "I demand that he be turned out of this room immediately. If not, then I will never enter it again."

"Nor I," seconded young Blackwall.

The superintendent had but one choice, and that was to get the detective away as speedily as possible. He was a stranger, and it would never do to permit him to drive away regular frequenters.

"I must request you to go quietly away," the superintendent announced. "You are a stranger to me, while these gentlemen are well known. Your quarrel with them is nothing to me, but it must not be carried on here."

He spoke now in a comparatively civil manner.

"I am perfectly willing to do that," agreed

Kinworth, "as my business here is done. I had a few words to say to the 'gentlemen,' and having said them, I am ready to relieve your place of my presence."

"Very well, go."

The superintendent waved his hand and the way to the door was cleared, and with a bow the detective walked up the room.

"You have not heard the last of this matter, my young bantam," remarked the doctor, as the detective passed him.

"Just as you please about that," was the quiet response.

"And you shall pay dearly for the blow you struck me," put in Cambeth.

"Very well, sir," said Kinworth; "only take care that you do not make a mistake."

He went on up the room and out, and the crowd drew a breath of relief when he was gone. His wicked-looking revolvers had made the room feel as if it were chilly.

"Who is he?" the superintendent asked, turning to Doctor Gonsalvo.

"I hardly know," was the answer. "I fell in with him the other night, was introduced to him, and rather liked him. Took him for a gentleman. I brought him here, and showed him around quite a little. To-night he offered me and my friend here an insult that could not be passed, and we tried to floor him."

"And he was too much for both of you," finished one of those who stood near. "I do not wonder, for he was a terror with his fists and weapons. I'll bet he is from the woolly West."

"I believe you are right in that," the doctor agreed.

"He is something of the stamp of that man from Texas who got away with the bunco sharp," observed another.

"He was a terror," remarked still another, "and I would not want him to try any target-practice at me. If you are wise, gentlemen, you will let your quarrel with him drop right where it is. He has a mighty bad eye."

Gonsalvo's face was serious, and he said nothing; but Cambeth growled:

"It will not go well with him if I meet him again. A man does not strike me and get off without a return of the compliment."

Gonsalvo turned upon him quickly.

"By the way," he exclaimed, "you and I have a score to settle. You shall answer to me for the indignity you have heaped upon a lady whose name has been mentioned. Here is my card, you cur!"

As he uttered the words the doctor gave his card a twirl and it struck Cambeth squarely in the face.

This was an additional surprise for everybody, and Cambeth turned deathly pale with rage at the insult.

"And here is mine!" he cried; and he spit in the doctor's face with force.

The doctor's hand flew to his pocket, and there would undoubtedly have been blood spilled but for the timely interference of the spectators.

The two men were held apart, and Cambeth was got out of the room as soon as possible. Young Blackwall followed him.

"We will settle it," Cambeth cried, as he was being hustled out; "you may expect to hear from me."

"The sooner the better," retorted the doctor.

Cambeth being a stranger, he had to go. It worked the same with him as it had with the detective, except that in the latter case the "bouncers" took a more active part in the decession.

The Donjon had not seen so much excitement in a year, and it was an hour before ordinary quiet reigned.

Dr. Gonsalvo did not tarry long, but after explaining the affair so that his own part in it was the brightest, took his leave.

In the mean time Kinworth had gone direct to his hotel.

When he arrived there he found a note awaiting him, and on opening it he saw that it was from Mrs. Ekyngs, Mrs. Milburn's friend and companion.

"Come here immediately," the note ran; "Mrs. Milburn is missing."

This information startled the detective, and troubled him not a little. Had his adventure been simply a side issue, a scheme to keep him out of the way while the daring rascals made away with the lady in whose interest he was working?

He could hardly believe it, and yet the case looked suspicious.

He hastened to obey the summons without delay. He did not even wait to adopt his disguise.

When he reached the house where the ladies had removed to, he asked for Mrs. Ekyngs, and was soon in her presence.

By this time the hour was late. Mrs. Ekyngs had paved the way for his coming, however. She had reported that Mrs. Milburn was missing, and that she had sent for a friend who would undertake to find her.

"I came as soon as I received your note," the detective said, "it was awaiting me at the hotel. What does it mean?"

"It means just what it says," the woman an-

swered. "Mrs. Milburn went out at eight o'clock, and has not returned."

"Where was she going?"

"Only to the nearest drug-store, sir." She had a nervous headache, and went to get something for it. I offered to go for her, but she preferred to go herself, as she thought the air would do her good."

"Why did you not accompany her?"

"She would not let me do so. I had my slippers on, and only a wrapper, and as she did not expect to be out more than five minutes she would not let me take the trouble to change."

"She went out at eight o'clock, you say. It is now nearly twelve. This is serious. Had she received any communication of any sort? or had any one been to see her that you know of?"

"Neither, sir, that I am aware of."

"How was she dressed?"

The woman described as nearly as she could, and the detective went away, telling her that he would call at an early hour in the morning.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN IMPORTANT PAPER.

LIGHTNING-FLASH was puzzled.

Where could the woman be? What had happened to her?

Two questions which, of course, he could not answer. It was a mystery, and one which gave him good reason to feel anxious.

Just as he left the house he met a policeman.

"Where is the nearest drug-store?" the detective inquired.

The officer told him.

"Is there any other in this neighborhood, as near—or at any rate not much further away?" Kinworth further questioned.

The policeman answered that, too, and from his report there were three within a short distance in as many directions.

"Why do you inquire?" the officer asked in turn. "Anything wrong?"

"Yes, a lady is missing," the detective explained. "She left this house at eight o'clock to go to a drug-store, and has not been since."

"Humph! that is peculiar."

Kinworth hastened off to the nearest of the three drug-stores.

It was open, and entering he made inquiries as to whether a woman of the description given had been there.

The clerk in charge could not tell positively, but did not think there had been any such person in the store during the evening.

Going to the next of the three stores, the detective found it closed, and went on to the third. That was open, and there he had better luck.

There had been such a lady there about eight o'clock, and she had made a simple purchase and had gone out again immediately.

"Did you notice anything peculiar in her actions?" Kinworth questioned.

"No, sir," was the answer; "she was neither nervous nor excited that I could notice, and asked for what she wanted in a very quiet tone."

"There was no one with her?"

"No, sir."

The clerk, like the policeman, asked what was wrong, and Kinworth took the pains to inform him of as much as was necessary.

His next move was to go to a police station and report the matter.

At the station he learned that an elderly woman had been knocked down by a runaway team between eight and nine o'clock, and that she had been taken to Bellevue Hospital unconscious.

Fearing that it was Mrs. Milburn, he set out for the hospital immediately to ascertain.

There was no cab near and no street car in sight when he started, and preferring to walk on rather than wait for a car, he set out.

No car overtook him before he reached Twenty-seventh street, and having come so far on foot, he saw that he would have to complete the distance in the same manner.

Turning into East Twenty-seventh street, he hurried on, and ere long was in a neighborhood where the streets were almost deserted.

He had gone some distance, when, suddenly, as he came to a corner, he saw two or three men engaged in a silent struggle in the shadows only a little distance away up the avenue he was about to cross.

Without a word he ran swiftly to the spot.

He saw that an elderly gentleman was being robbed. A powerful, evil-looking fellow had hold of him from behind, and another was "going through" his pockets.

One of them had a hand over their victim's mouth.

"You cowards!" the detective hissed as he ran up; "take that—and that!"

With the words went out two blows, and both the footpads went to the pavement with a crash.

Then, as Kinworth looked at the man he had rescued, he saw that it was Mancred Blackwall!

"One good turn deserves another, Mr. Blackwall," he observed.

"You?" the banker exclaimed.

"Nobody else!" was the smiling assurance. "But, have they taken anything out of your pockets, sir?"

"Yes, they have stolen my watch and pocket-book," was the reply. "Do not let them get away."

The men were upon their feet now, and the larger of the pair made a dash at the detective with a knife in hand.

Quick as a flash one of the detective's revolvers spoke, and the fellow's arm dropped.

"We will have none of that, if you please," he said; "and none of that, either," he added, as the other started to run away. "Stop! or I will bore you."

The fellow stopped, and footsteps were heard running toward the scene.

In a few moments a policeman was on hand.

"What's up?" he demanded.

"Case of highway robbery," explained the detective. "These fellows were robbing this gentleman when I happened along, and I took a hand in the game. I will turn them over to you. That one has a bullet in his arm, which I had to give him to defend myself, as you may see by that knife."

"I will take care of them," said the officer, and he set about doing so; but the two fellows again attempted to resist arrest, as they saw that the detective had put away his weapon.

"You won't go, eh?" Kinworth cried; "we'll see about that!" and in about two brief seconds the pair were handcuffed together, the left hand of the wounded man to the right hand of the other.

The policeman was amazed.

"Who are you?" he asked. "Are you on the force?"

"No, I am not on the force," the detective answered, "but I have occasion to use the tools now and then."

"And you know how to do it, too, I should say. You will come to the station and make the charge, if you please, sir," to Mr. Blackwall.

"Is it far to the station?" Kinworth asked.

"No; the Twenty-eighth street station is only a few blocks away."

"I'll go along too, then, and get my wristlets when you are done with them."

They set out, and in a little time were at the station, where the fellows were taken care of, one being locked up and the other sent to a hospital to have his wound dressed.

When Mr. Blackwall had made his charge and had given his name and address, as had Kinworth, the two left the station together.

"You have done me a good service, sir," said Mr. Blackwall, as they paused outside for a moment before parting. "I shall not forget it, sir."

"I have done no more than a common service, such as men ought to render to one another," the detective made response. "I am glad that I happened there at the right time."

"And so am I!" Mr. Blackwall exclaimed. "By the way, where are you going to?" he asked. "Are you going this way?" indicating toward Broadway.

"No, I am going over to Bellevue," Kinworth answered.

"To Bellevue! What takes you there?"

"There is a person there about whose identity I want to inquire. I must hurry on, too, sir."

"Well, good-night. I won't forget this. By the way, I want to talk with you again. Will you come to my office at ten to-morrow?"

"I will call if I can," the detective promised.

"Do so."

They parted, the banker going out to Broadway and the detective to the hospital.

"If he only knew the awful, horrible truth," the banker mused. "I wonder if he has even a suspicion? But no, he cannot have. No, for—But, what must he think of my words of this evening at the doctor's? Curse the doctor, and the whole terrible mess! I wish I were well out of it."

The thoughts of the detective ran in a similar strain.

"I wonder if he knows the truth," he reflected, when they had parted. "I wonder if my suspicion is the truth! I must know it all, and yet, I dread the revelation. But, it is true. Something within me tells me the whole story. I do not need much now to satisfy me that it is all as I suspect."

He made his way back to the scene of the struggle. He had an object in going there. It was possible that he would find something on the ground that either the robbers or the banker had dropped.

Arriving there, he looked around carefully, but found nothing, and was on the point of moving on, when his eyes fell upon a folded paper lying in the gutter near the curb.

He picked it up, and going to a street-lamp, examined it.

It was a page containing a family record, and had evidently been torn from a small Bible.

"Heavens!" the young man gasped, "it is as I suspected; it is as I feared. Now the mystery of the past is cleared up. Henry Abington's son is found. No need to look further for him, I think."

Putting the paper carefully away in his pocket, he went on to the hospital, where he made in-

quyry about the woman who had been run over in the street.

She had come to, had given her name, and it was not Mrs. Milburn.

Where could that lady be?

He went to Police Headquarters to find out whether anything had been learned regarding the missing woman, and was told there had not.

There was nothing more he could do in the matter then, so once more he went to the hotel.

Another note awaited him.

This time it was from Mrs. Milburn herself, and it explained the mystery. She had become lost after leaving the drug-store, and could not find her way back to the house. She knew the number, but had forgotten the street—as it curiously happened. She wandered on and on, hoping to find it with out having to ask any one, but at last realized that she was utterly bewildered and sought direction.

As she did not know the street, no one could direct her, of course; and the lady was in a dilemma. Worst of all, as she found when she wanted some change for fare, she had lost her pocketbook. There was little in it, but it was all she had taken with her from the house.

She knew the name of the hotel where she had been, and had inquired the way there. Boarding a car, it was then that she discovered her loss. She got out again immediately, walked to the hotel, explained her case and was given a room, and then she sent the note to Kinworth in which she explained it all.

As the note stated that she had been given a room, and as the hour was now very late, Kinworth retired, being about fagged out. Next morning he went to the hotel, found the lady all right, and took her to the boarding-house where her friend was found to be almost crazed with anxiety concerning her.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A MORNING OF STARTLING EVENTS.

"GOOD-MORNING to you, Missus Snipes."

"And good-morning to you, Mister Woggs."

"I hope that you are well this morning, Missus Snipes. But then I can see that you are. You are as fresh and rosy as a little maid, upon my word you are."

"I am quite well, I thank you, Mister Woggs, and I hope that you are the same yourself. But I can see that you are. You are as bright and cheery as a lad of fifty."

Pericles Woggs and Dorinda Snipes, and their every-day greeting.

It was on the morning following the events recorded in the previous chapter, and the two old persons had just prepared for the business of the day.

"Well, and how was business with you yesterday, Missus Snipes?" Woggs kindly inquired.

"It was tol'able to fair, yesterday, I thank you, Mister Woggs; tol'able to fair. And how was it with you?"

"I am happy to say that it was fair to good, yesterday, Missus Snipes; fair to good. I believe the trade in Jews-harps is lookin' up, Missus Snipes, I do indeed. I had a call for one yesterday."

"Ah! that is good. I am glad to hear that. Peanuts was good yesterday, too, Mister Woggs."

"Glad to hear it. Oh! there is hope for this country yet, if we don't let the furrenners get too strong a footin'. It is the furrenners that has played the merry Ned with this land of the free and home of the brave, Missus Snipes."

"I know it, Mister Woggs; I realize it more and more every day. There is too many furrenners here for the good of the country."

"You never spoke a truer word in your life, Missus Snipes; never in your life. We must shut out the furren element, or we must perish."

"You are positively right, Mister Woggs, as you allus are. There must be a great change, or— Oh! oh, my heart and soul! Oh! McAllester, McAllester!"

An awful wail from a cat had been heard, and Mrs. Snipes sprung to her feet, clasping her hands and uttering the exclamation quoted. Her eyes were open to their widest, and there was a look of horror in them. Woggs was frightened almost out of his wits, and followed the direction of her terrified gaze.

There, in the middle of the street, lay poor McAllester, dead.

The aged feline had got in the way of a heavy truck that was thundering along, had not been quick enough to escape, and the wheel of the truck had passed over his neck, killing him instantly.

"Oh! my poor cat, my poor McAllester!" Mrs. Snipes wailed. "He is dead, he is dead; and woe is me."

Woggs hobbled out into the street and picked up the body.

In his heart the old man was secretly glad, but he took care not to let it be known. Now, perhaps, the object of his devotion would take him, pipe and all. There would be a vacant place in her heart and another at her fireside.

"Missus Woggs," he said, sorrowfully, as he laid the dead cat down before her, "words fail

me to express what I feel on this sad occasion. As we have many times remarked, flesh is truly grass."

"Oh! my poor cat! my poor McAllester!" Mrs. Snipes continued to lament, as she wrung her hands. "Who would have thought that his death would be so terrible and sudden? I shall never know happiness more. He was my only companion."

"Do not go on so, Missus Snipes, please don't," Woggs begged in fond tones; "I feel so bad when you cry. Let me take the place of McAllester by your side, and here by his dead body I vow that I will devote my life to your happiness. Missus Snipes, take me into your heart and affection, and let me be your McAllester!"

"Oh, you do not know what you ask, Mister Woggs. You could not fill the place that is made vacant by this untimely death. McAllester did not smoke."

Woggs's head dropped. Now the argument was all against him. Which did he love most, his pipe or Mrs. Snipes?

"I will not smoke in the house," he promised.

"But the smell of that old pipe is allus about you, Mr. Woggs, and it makes me think of that half-sister of mine and her snuff. I can't abear the smell, and no use to try. It really makes me sick. Oh! McAllester, McAllester! You did not smoke, and I loved you more than tongue can tell."

She took the dead cat up in her arms, and fondling it in a way that made Woggs's blood run cold. He hated cats worse than he hated snakes.

"But, you will soon be finding another cat," he argued, "and you know that I can't abear them."

"I must have a companion of some kind," was her tearful response, "and one that does not smoke."

"And if I give up smoking—"

The thought of parting with his pipe made him feel so lonesome in anticipation that he could not finish the sentence.

"Give up smoking, Mr. Woggs," she said, as she raised her tearful face to his and took hold of his hand; "give up smoking, and you shall be my McAllester for life. I promise it."

Woggs gulped down the lump that was in his throat, pressed her hand fondly, and made answer:

"Missus Snipes, give me one week to try to break off the habit. I will do the very best I can. You are worth the sacrifice, great as it is. Give me one week."

"Take it, Mister Woggs, and may you nobly succeed. Once you give up smoking, then our dreams of happiness may be realized. You shall be my McAllester forever."

"Thank you, Missus Snipes, thank you. I will do my best. And now I must get back to business and my morning paper."

With other fond pressures of hands they parted, and the old man tottered away, while the old lady tenderly wrapped McAllester up in her apron and put him tearfully out of sight.

Woggs's heart was sad and heavy. It was his hour to smoke, and he longed for his pipe. But now he must wean himself if he would win the fair widow to be his bride. It was a terrible ordeal, but he realized that this appetite of the flesh must be overcome.

He put his pipe and "bakky" away out of sight, and took up his paper. He read for a little while, but he grew uneasy. He was not right. He wanted to smoke. He did not enjoy his paper as usual. Something was altogether wrong.

Mrs. Snipes watched him slyly with interest. An hour passed, and by that time Woggs was almost crazy to smoke. His hands trembled, he could not fix his mind upon anything, and he was completely miserable as he well could be.

At the end of another hour he felt that the world was a dismal failure. What to do he did not know. He would try some strong coffee.

Now Woggs had a tiny stove in his little stall, and it was his habit to make for himself a cup of hot coffee at noon each day. He built his fire, and put on the pan. Into the pan he put the necessary water and coffee, and took up his paper once more while he waited for the beverage to draw.

While he waited, a customer came along who called for something that the old man had to reach high up on a shelf over the stove to get. As he reached he slipped, and came near getting a fall. He caught himself, however, and did no further damage than almost to spill his coffee.

No further damage? He did not notice that his old pipe had dropped into the coffee-pan!

By and by the coffee was ready, and adding a little condensed milk and some sugar to the cup he had poured out; he raised it to his lips.

He had taken two or three good swallows, when he suddenly stopped and grew pale. What was the matter with it? He grew white, and made a bolt for the curb. He was deathly sick, and proceeded to surrender an account that would have done credit to a first ocean voyage.

Mrs. Snipes presently saw him, and ran over to him.

"My dear Mister Woggs," she cried in alarm, "whatever is the matter?"

"Oh!" groaned Woggs, "I—I'm— Uuuggh!— I'm zo zick, Missus Snipes! I—I'm— Uuuggh!"

No need to tell that he was sick.

Mrs. Snipes held his head for him for a few minutes until he felt slightly better, when she led him back to his place and ran over to her own establishment and brought him a lemon.

When he had somewhat recovered, she inquired:

"What was it made you so sick, Mister Woggs?"

"Oh, it was the coffee," Woggs groaned; "something was in the coffee. I was wild for a smoke, and I thought I would try some coffee instead. Smell of it, Missus Snipes."

Dorinda put her nose to the cup, and the smell almost caused her to lose her breakfast. She drew back in haste, and gasped:

"That stinking pipe!"

"Wh—what?" cried Woggs.

"That stinking pipe," she repeated. "Your pipe is in your coffee."

Woggs came near doing the sea-sick act, again. He looked in the pan, and sure enough there lay the old soldier. He turned away from the sight with a gasp.

"Take it away," he requested. "I can't look at it again."

Mrs. Snipes took pan, cup, pipe and all and threw them into a convenient ash-barrel.

The desire to smoke was gone. Woggs hated the thought of it. He vowed that he never wanted to see the pipe and "bakky" more.

When he had eat the lemon he felt better, and was soon himself again. He took up his paper with new interest, and was soon deep in its contents, with nothing to trouble him.

An hour passed.

Woggs was still reading, and suddenly he gave a start, wiped his glasses and looked closer. Could he believe that he actually saw it—the name of Dorinda Snipes in print? Yes, there it was, in big letters, and he read the little item over and over again.

When he had read it over at least half a dozen times, then he looked up, saw that no customer was at hand, and hurried over to the opposite corner.

Mrs. Snipes was making a shroud for McAllester.

"Missus Snipes, Missus Snipes!" the excited old man exclaimed, "here is something that will be sure to interest you."

"What is it, Mister Woggs?" Dorinda asked, eagerly.

"It is something that personally concerns you, Missus Snipes."

"Personally concerns me, Mister Woggs!"

"Yes; just pay attention and I will read it."

Adjusting his glasses and folding the paper to suit him, the old man read:

"IMPORTANT NOTICE!"

"If this should meet the eye of Dorinda Snipes, who was at one time housekeeper for Reuben Whitford, she will learn of something to her advantage by sending her present address to Mr. Armstrong, Hotel, New York. Any person knowing whether Dorinda Snipes is living or dead, please communicate."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A WOMAN CAN KEEP A SECRET.

As Mr. Woggs ended, Mrs. Snipes was looking at him with eyes and mouth wide open with wonder.

McAllester, with his shroud half on, had been dropped to the ground.

"Wonder of wonders!" the old lady exclaimed; "can that mean me?"

"Did you ever keep house for a Mr. Whitford?" Woggs asked.

"Yes; but—"

"Then it must mean you and nobody else."

"Excuse me," another voice at that moment broke in, "but are you the Dorinda Snipes who once kept house for Reuben Whitford?"

The two old persons looked quickly up, and saw a young man standing near them.

It was Prentiss Kinworth, the detective!

A word of explanation is all that is needed. The detective was on his way to the bank to keep his appointment with Mr. Blackwall. He was passing the stand just in time to hear Woggs begin to read, and catching the name, stopped to listen.

"Yes, her is me, sir," Mrs. Snipes owned.

"Well, madam," Kinworth informed, "I am the person who put that notice in the paper. I have been trying to find you."

"And now you have found me, sir," rejoined Mrs. Snipes, "how is it to my advantage?"

She had recovered from the first shock of her surprise, and could now hold her own.

"It will be of advantage to you in this way," the detective went on to explain. "I will pay you liberally for some information which you no doubt can furnish."

"Then it is information you are after, is it?"

"Yes, it is information I am after."

"And what do you want to know?"

"Can you spare the time for a little conversation now?" Kinworth asked. "If not, then I will call at your home, if you will tell me where it is."

"I can talk here as well as anywhere, and may be better," Mrs. Snipes answered. "Go right ahead, sir."

"Very well. Please pay attention as I do so. Thirty years ago you were the housekeeper of Reuben Whitford. He had a daughter Celeste, who married a clerk in her father's bank. His name was Abington. They lived at No. — street. You used to be with Mrs. Abington a good deal. She had two children, one a boy and the other a baby girl. I know the dates of their birth. After the death of Mr. Whitford, Henry Abington and his wife and children disappeared. Do you know what became of them?"

Mrs. Snipes was paying strict attention. Her eyes were wide open with wonder. Who was this young man who knew so much of the past so well?

"Young man," she answered, "may be I do, and may be I don't. What do you want to know about them for? What is your object in asking these questions?"

Mr. Woggs rubbed his hands and looked on smiling. He even winked at the old lady.

"Mrs. Snipes is sharp," he told himself, "and she is smart enough for him. I am proud of her. He won't get much out of her."

"My object," the detective answered, "is to clear up the mystery and bring a lost child into her mother's arms. I can tell you a good deal more if you are not yet willing to tell me anything."

"Answer me one question," said the old lady, "and I'll talk to you."

"Very well, what is your question?"

"Who is the mother and daughter you speak of?"

"The mother is Celeste Whitford—as her name used to be, and the daughter is her baby Essylt."

"Celeste Whitford alive?" the woman exclaimed.

"She is alive," the detective assured, "and if you will give me some information I promise you that you shall see her."

"I will tell you anything and everything, sir!" Mrs. Snipes hastily promised. "Only ask what you want to know."

"Very well. Tell me whether you ever saw this before."

As he spoke he drew from his pocket the leaf containing the family record, the paper he had found on the previous night.

She took it and looked at it.

"Yes," she answered, "I have seen it before. It used to be in a Bible that Celeste had."

"Good. Now, do you know what became of Henry Whitford?"

Mrs. Snipes suddenly became reserved. She looked at Woggs, and remembered that she had time and again declared to him that she was a woman who could keep a secret, if no other woman could.

"I know a good deal," she declared, "and I know some things that I ain't quite ready to tell. As I have said to Mr. Woggs here, many and many's the time, I am a woman who can keep a secret if no other woman can. A wink is just as good as a nod, a wink is, sir, from me. This is a wink, sir," distorting one eye, "and this is a nod, sir," bobbing her head; "and you can't say that one ain't just as good as t'other, now can you?"

Kinworth was half-disgusted. He saw that he would have to humor the old woman, though, so he answered good-naturedly:

"The wink seems to be about as good as the nod, madam, so far as I can see."

"That is what I have allus told Mister Woggs, sir. And now, as I have told him, too, sir—never do you mind what I know, sir."

"But, my good woman," the detective protested, "you promised to tell me everything."

"That was before I thought of this, sir. I have made up my mind, sir, that a woman can keep a secret, and I mean to prove it."

Kinworth was now altogether disgusted. He felt as though he would like to take hold of the old woman and shake the information out of her. But it would never do to take harsh measures.

"How long have you been keeping this secret, madam?" he asked.

"This many a year, sir," was the reply.

"Then have you not shown the world that you can keep a secret? I think you have, and that the world will say, 'Well done!' Now the time is ripe for you to let out what you know, and make the wrong right. You will be doing much good."

But, if I tell you, then I won't have no secret, will I? And the world will say, 'There, I told you so!'"

"Not so, madam. I am sure that the world stands ready to applaud you. You will make others happy, and will have done good to yourself."

"You don't know the world as well I do, young man."

The blood of the detective was boiling, but he had to keep it down and had to play his game with care.

"But, think of the wrong you will do your old employer's daughter, Mrs. Snipes, if you persist in refusing to tell what you know," he argued.

"It is your duty to set forth everything you can, so that a mystery of the past can be cleared up. Don't you think so, Mr. Woggs?" turning to him.

He had noticed that there was something between them.

"Yes, I must say that I agree with you, young man," the old man owned. "I am sure she has kept her secret well, whatever it may be."

"Of course she has! Madam, it is your duty to tell it now. To hold it longer would be almost a sin. Listen: When Henry Abington left New York with his wife, he put his children in charge of a woman named Mrs. Swann. He gave his name to her as Sigbert Parmilye."

Mrs. Snipes gave a start.

"One of the children became lost," the detective went on. "The other is living, and is now twenty-seven years old. She is the daughter of the late partner in that banking-house there."

"You are much mistaken, sir," Mrs. Snipes interrupted.

"Then you ought to set me right. But, hear me out: Abington took his wife to San Francisco, put her in a mad-house there, and left her to her fate. He never went for her, and never was heard of again."

"Did he do that?"

"He did."

"The wretch! But, I will tell what I know when the time is ripe."

"When the time is ripe!" the detective exclaimed; "it is ripe now."

"No it ain't," the woman opposed. "It will be ripe when I am put on the witness stand, where I can show that one woman in the world has kept a secret."

"Ha! you will tell then, will you?"

"Yes, I will tell then."

"Good enough! I will trouble you no further now. You faithfully promise that you will appear when wanted, and will tell everything?"

"I will."

At that the detective had to stop. He was somewhat put out that he could not get her to tell what she knew, but since she had promised to tell it finally, and he now knew where to find her, he let it rest. She could tell him nothing new, though from her own words she thought she could; but he wanted her to prove his suspicions, and to identify persons.

"Allow me to make one confession before we part," he observed: "I am not the man I claimed to be. I am not Mr. Armstrong, but his agent. He is an older man, and it is likely that he will be the next one to come and see you. He will take you to see Celeste Whitford—as her name used to be."

With that he went on, leaving the old pair looking after him in surprise.

"Say there is nothing new under the sun now, will you, Mister Woggs!" the old woman exclaimed. "This beats the world. Who would have thought it!"

"You are a clever woman, Mrs. Snipes, a mighty clever woman," Woggs complimented. "I am proud to know you, and I shall be prouder when you are my happy bride."

"I would tell you all about it, Woggsy, dear, but then I would not be keeping the secret. Didn't I put him off nice, though? I tell you I can keep a secret, if no other woman can, so you mustn't mind if I say again—Never do you mind, Mister Woggs, never do you mind."

"I shan't mind at all," Woggs declared.

"That is right. Don't you mind at all. When the time is ripe, and I am called on to speak, then you shall be present, and if you will keep your ears open you will hear something that will surprise you. Then you will know something that that little Grifft knows."

"Oh, I shall be on hand, Missus Snipes, and never fear."

"Of course you will, and— Well, there, I declare! I meant to watch which way that young man went, and I forgot it. Did you notice?"

"No, I did not. And I must go back to my corner. Oh! Missus Snipes, there is nothin' atween us now, and soon we shall be all in all to—"

"Oh! goodness me!" the old woman exclaimed, interrupting, "I had forgotten my poor McAllester! Here he is on the ground, with his shroud half on and half off! This is awful. Do not speak of happiness now, Mister Woggs: wait till McAllester is cold in the grave, at any rate."

"Alas, yes," sighed Woggs, as he hobbled away; "but, happiness is at hand at last. No more tom-cat, and no more pipe—Ugh! no; no more pipe!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A DUEL TO THE DEATH.

IN the mean time Detective Kinworth had entered the bank.

He was somewhat chagrined at the way he had been put off by Mrs. Snipes, now that he had found her, but he made the best of it. True, he might have got out of her all that she could tell, had he questioned her closely, but he did not think it worth the trouble, as he could oblige her to tell at another time, if necessary.

He found the banker in, and his face showed that he had passed a troubled and sleepless night. He looked haggard and worn.

"I am glad you are here, young man," he greeted, "for I want to have a talk with you."

"That is what I am here for, sir," Kinworth announced.

"I want to ask you, first, what interest Mrs. Morgan Milburn has in this case, if any?"

The detective was not surprised. He knew that Blackwall had got that point at the hotel.

"Her interest in it," was the answer, "is that of a deeply wronged wife. *She and Celeste Abington are one!*"

"Heavens!"

"Does it surprise you? It need not. There may be more surprises in store for you in the near future."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. This game is about coming to a head. I have it all in hand now, and know your triple secret, Mr. Henry Abington!"

"Then you still insist that I am Henry Abington? You are wide of the mark, my boy. The real Henry Abington died when Sigbert Parmilye died."

"Pah! I know that Henry Abington and Sigbert Parmilye were one and the same. If one is dead the other must be. Dare you assert that Sigbert Parmilye's dead?"

"Of course he is dead," the banker stoutly maintained. "How can you think otherwise? He is dead and buried, as a hundred witnesses can testify."

"Dare you invite the insurance companies to open his grave?"

The banker's face grew white, and perspiration started upon his brow.

"It is useless to deny it," the inflexible detective went on, "for I know the whole case. I have unearthed the whole foul game!"

"My God!" the banker cried, "I am lost!"

He leaned back in his chair, his head fell forward on his breast, and his arms fell into his lap.

His words had been uttered in a hoarse whisper.

"Yes, you *are* lost!" the detective affirmed. "You have sowed the wind; you must reap the whirlwind. I see no way for you to escape the calamity that is upon you."

The wretched man groaned.

"You assert that you know all," he presently said; "what do you know?"

Kinworth leaned over the table and spoke for some minutes in an almost whisper and very earnest manner.

"It is true, true!" the banker moaned rather than said; "it is all true. But, that is not all."

In turn he told something in the same guarded tone, as though the very air in the room with them should not hear.

"That does not surprise me, for I had guessed the truth," Kinworth averred.

"Then you must save me. Oh! this is horrible, horrible! Will you not save me? You must, you *shall* save me from this awful ruin!"

"Tell me how I am to do it, sir."

"How you are to do it? Why, tell that woman anything, so long as you do not tell her the truth! Put her off! Tell her that you have failed to learn anything. Let this secret die with us. Who will be the wiser?"

"Impossible!" the detective sternly declared.

"All my sympathy goes on the other side. Shall I leave that mother forever without her children? Shall I leave that pure girl with a blot of mystery upon her past, when her mother is yearning for her? Shall I leave that son without a name, when he has an honorable birthright? Shall the lives of three persons be blighted further, that you be left free to carry on your villainy? Heaven forbid! Shall I tarnish my reputation as a detective by declaring that I am unable to work out the mystery? Why, with the clews I have been putting into Mrs. Milburn's hands, the veriest novice could finish the work! No; your fate is before you, and I will not raise one finger to avert it."

"You forget that I saved you the other night—even last night."

"After you had conspired to have me killed! But, no; I do not forget that. I will at least put forth an effort to keep you out of prison. I can promise no more."

"It is public exposure that I dread more than anything else."

"And well you may."

"Oh! this is awful. You must—you shall spare me! You can turn this sword of Fate aside if you will."

"Only that it be plunged the deeper into innocent hearts? No! You must reap the fruit of your sowing. I can do no more for you than I have promised. I will try to make terms with the insurance companies so that they will spare you."

"But, if I do not get that money I am ruined! Come, I will give you half—"

"No more of that! You do not know me!"

"But, think of my wife and children—"

"You disgust me!" the detective declared, as he rose to go. "I cannot remain in the same room with you any longer. You shall hear from me later."

And without pausing to notice the pleading call he hastened out of the building.

Blackwall paced the floor in the heat of rage

and despair. His hands were clinched, and there was a wild, determined look in his eyes.

"I have been a fool, just as Gonsalvo declared," he muttered. "I am sorry now that I did not let that knife seek his heart. By heavens, it may not be too late yet! I will see about it."

Half an hour later found him in the presence of the dark-visaged doctor.

"Well, and what now?" was the doctor's demand.

"That detective shall die!" the banker hissed. "I was a fool to save his life last night. I want you to kill him—"

"Ha, ha, ha! You have come to your senses, have you? Well, you are too late to engage my services in *that* line. I am preparing to get out of the country, and you had better be doing the same thing. You don't want to put it off until it is too late."

"What! you are running away, when one man out of our path will give us both safety!"

"Fool! You threw that away last night! It is too late now. Yes, I am about to get out of the country. I have a duel on hand, and after I have laid out my man I shall be off."

"A duel, you say? Whom are you going to fight?"

"No matter, since *you* have no hand in it. I almost wish that it were with you, for by your consummate weakness at a critical moment you have ruined everything. Come, get out of my house, for I have no more time to waste with you!"

The order was peremptory, and the banker took his leave without another word. It seemed that every support was failing him. He almost wished that he was dead.

In the mean time the duel between Dr. Gonsalvo and Dugald Cambeth had been hurried to a certainty. It was all arranged. They were to meet at a lonesome place on the Jersey shore on the Hudson, without seconds, and were to fight to the death.

The doctor was confident of winning. He was a good shot, and revolvers were the weapons Cambeth had chosen.

Both men were desperate. Both loved the same woman, as such men love—if it can be called by so holy a name; and both were determined.

Dr. Gonsalvo had arranged for immediate flight. And he intended to take Miss Parmilye with him as his bride! Already he had sent a note to her, telling that he expected to call at a certain hour. He intended to use desperate means. He would drug the housekeeper, carry the young lady to his own house, and there the ceremony would be performed. Then flight would follow.

The men met at the arranged place and hour. No person was near to witness their fight, and they wasted no words in talk, but got right to work.

Examining their weapons, they moved away from each other backward a certain number of paces, and then opened fire.

Both men were struck at the first shots, as they showed by the sudden start each made, and a stream of blood flowed down Cambeth's face. The doctor's left arm was rendered useless.

They raised their weapons and fired again. Again both shots told. Cambeth's shoulder received one bullet, while the other buried itself in the doctor's breast, at which he staggered, but did not fall.

A third time the reports of their weapons rung out spitefully, and the bullets went home. Another was lodged in the doctor's breast, and the one from his weapon cut into Cambeth's heart, and instantly he fell forward upon his face, dead.

The doctor, too, was mortally wounded, and well did he know it.

Staggering forward to where the body of his opponent lay, he drew a dagger from the lining of his coat and plunged it into the lifeless form with vengeful force. Time after time his arm rose and fell, the life-blood gushing from his own mortal wounds with every effort, and at last he fell forward, to expire a few moments later.

It was an awful scene, but no one witnessed it, and when by accident the bodies were finally found, which was not until a full year later, they were beyond recognition.

In the mean time, that is—during the time of the duel, Detective Kinworth had not been idle. Of course he knew nothing about the affair, but he had other important work on hand. He feared to leave Miss Parmilye unprotected any longer, for now he did not know what step might be taken by Blackwall.

Adopting his disguise, he went to her home.

He was readily admitted, and arrived just after a note had come from Gonsalvo. Miss Parmilye mentioned it, as it stated that Mr. Blackwall wanted her at the bank at four o'clock to sign important papers, and Gonsalvo requested the favor of accompanying her.

This was his ruse to have her dressed for the street when he came.

Kinworth exposed him without favor, and also warned her against Blackwall himself. He had come to take her to her mother

he announced, and insisted that she must go. And so it was arranged as speedily as possible.

An hour later and the mother and daughter were made known to each other, and the scene that followed must be left for the imagination to depict. Kinworth did not make known his identity to the young lady, and had requested Mrs. Milburn not to do so, so for the present he was simply Mr. Armstrong.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. SURPRISING DISCLOSURES.

Five days passed, and Dr. Hubbler of San Francisco had arrived.

The time had been spent by Kinworth in trying to restore Mrs. Milburn's memory by bringing her in constant contact with once-familiar scenes.

He had nearly succeeded. Now her memory-flashes were of longer duration, and occasionally she would add something new to her store of memories of the past.

On the day after his arrival Dr. Hubbler had been given a chance to see young Blackwall. Kinworth desired to know whether he reminded the doctor of the Henry Abington who had left Mrs. Milburn in his care so many years ago.

The doctor was now an old man, but his mind was clear, bright, and vigorous, and he answered without hesitation that the young man was the very counterpart of the Henry Abington he had seen twenty-six years before.

Kinworth was satisfied.

The day following that was the one fixed upon as the day of the denouement. The place was the late residence of Sigbert Parmilye.

At the hour of ten several persons were assembled in the parlor of the house, and were awaiting the arrival of others.

They were, first, Mrs. Milburn and Miss Parmilye, and Mrs. Ekyngs and Mrs. Swann. Dr. Hubbler was there, and also Mrs. Snipes and Mr. Woggs. The latter pair sat as close together as young lovers are supposed to sit.

A little after the hour there was a ring at the bell, and Mrs. Swann answered it. She admitted Mr. Armstrong, Mr. Blackwall, Mr. Griffit, and an elderly gentleman whose identity was unknown.

Blackwall was pale and nervous, and looked as though he had rather be dead than be there. He had been forced to come. He had had his choice between that and arrest. Of two evils, he had chosen what he considered the least.

They entered the room and took seats, and without delay the detective proceeded with the business in hand.

"We are here for the purpose of righting a terrible wrong, as far as it is possible to make it right," he began, "and to prove the identity of certain persons. In order that we may all have a clear understanding of the case, I will give the particulars:

"Some thirty years ago one Reuben Whitford carried on a banking business on Wall street in this city. He had a daughter named Celeste. In his employ was a young man named Henry Abington. This young man married Miss Whitford. They were married on July 30th, 1854. On June 5th, 1855, a son was born to them, and on May 20th, 1858, a daughter. On August 10th, 1858, Mr. Whitford died, and it was found that his business was in very bad condition. When his affairs were settled there was little left. His son-in-law was enraged at this state of affairs, as he had counted upon coming into a handsome fortune. He began to ill-treat his wife, who was in delicate health, and in a little time her mind gave way and she became mildly insane.

"Taking his children, he put them into the care of a woman named Mrs. Swann. This is the lady," indicating the housekeeper. "He then gave his name as Sigbert Parmilye. That done, he took his invalid wife away, ostensibly for her health, but really to put her in the insane asylum of Doctor Hubbler of San Francisco. This gentleman is Doctor Hubbler, and this lady is the woman who was left in his charge twenty-six years ago. There Abington gave his name as Henry Mancred, and made the false statement that the woman was his sister, and that the death of her husband and children had destroyed her reason. He paid for one year's care and treatment, said that he would come again, and went away. He was never seen or heard from after that.

"The lady grew better, and finally got well, but her memory of the past was gone. She could remember nothing. All she knew of the past was what her villain of a husband had told the doctor, and that was false. She had retained, however, her knowledge of music, and when she was discharged from the asylum she sought employment as a teacher. She found a place in the home of Mr. Milburn. Later, his wife died, and some time after that he married Mrs. Abington. This was eight years after she had been left in the asylum. It was understood that she was a widow, and so believed herself, but it was not so. Her former husband was living. As she had not seen him in all that time, however, she was legally free, and her second marriage was perfectly valid.

"Two years ago, after fifteen years of happy wedlock with his second wife, Mr. Milburn

died. Of late years Mrs. Milburn's memory has been gradually returning, and a few weeks ago she engaged a detective to search out for her the mystery of the past. I am that detective. I set to work, with such vague clues as I could get, and now my task is about successfully accomplished. I will not go over the particulars of my work, for that is not necessary, but will simply sum up the results."

The detective paused for a moment, and all present were found paying the closest attention, especially Blackwall.

"Before I proceed further," Kinworth resumed, "let me ask Mrs. Milburn if she remembers *this*?"

As he spoke he drew from his pocket the leaf with the family record upon it, which he had found on the night when he had rescued Blackwall from the hands of the footpads.

The lady took it, and the banker's eyes opened wide as he saw it brought to light.

Mrs. Milburn looked at it for a moment, intently, and then exclaimed:

"Yes, yes! I remember it well! It is the record of my own family! I wrote it in my Bible soon after Essylt was born. Oh! I remember it well; I now remember it all—everything! At last the past is all clear! It has all come back to me now! Why, both of my children had the same birthmark, a—"

"Wait a few moments, please!" the detective interrupted. "I am glad that, at last, your memory is restored. It is what I expected would take place to-day, after the rapidity with which it has been improving since you came to New York. But let me finish my story:

"When Abington returned to New York, after an absence of four years, he went to the place where he had left his children. There he still used his assumed name of Parmilye, and the disguise in which he had first appeared in that character. During his absence one of the children, the boy, had been lost. He had been allowed to play in the street, and one day he wandered away from the house and was never seen again. The daughter was still with Mrs. Swann, however, and she was a pretty little child of five. From that time Mrs. Swann became Mr. Parmilye's housekeeper, and Miss Parmilye was brought up under her care until she was old enough to go abroad to school. Mr. Parmilye was at home but little, and never slept in his house more than once or twice a month when he was in the city. He had an office of some sort down-town, and it was supposed that he spent most of his time there. So his life went on until a short time ago when he died—as people generally supposed.

"But, in the mean time, what of Henry Abington, since we know that he and Sigbert Parmilye were one and the same? That part of the mystery I will now disclose. When he, Henry Abington, left San Francisco he went to New Orleans. There he appeared under the assumed name of Mancred Blackwall—"

Exclamations of surprise interrupted, and all eyes were turned upon the banker, who shrunk back into his chair with a groan.

"Yes, *that is the man!*" the detective affirmed. "He and Henry Abington are one and the same. In New Orleans he married—or, rather, became a bigamist, and two years later came to New York, where he entered into the banking business with himself as his own partner! In other words, all these years he has been playing a double role. Mancred Blackwall and Sigbert Parmilye and Henry Abington are one and the same person!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Essylt, springing up, "that cannot be true!"

"It is the terrible truth," the detective insisted. "Is it not so, Henry Abington?" addressing the banker.

"It is the truth," the banker groaned.

"All these years he has been playing this astonishing double role," the detective repeated. "You cannot grasp it? Let me explain what seems impossible. When Blackwall set out for New Orleans, he went no further than Philadelphia. That night he returned, and on the next day appeared at the bank as Sigbert Parmilye. Is this not so, Mr. Griffit?"

"It is the truth," the head clerk affirmed. "We played the game with great care, so that no one else in the bank might suspect."

"When Mr. Parmilye died, as was supposed," the detective went on, "Blackwall was telegraphed for. An accomplice in New Orleans answered the message. Parmilye was buried. Doctor Gonsalvo—who has disappeared and cannot be found—had given him a drug that had made him seem dead, but, on the night after the funeral, he dug the body up and resuscitated the comatose man. As Sigbert Parmilye, Henry Abington went to Philadelphia, and when the time was ripe he returned to New York as Mancred Blackwall. Is this not so, sir?"

"It is true," the unhappy man assented.

"There is one part of this business which I have promised not to reveal," the detective went on, "and, as it does not concern the matter in hand I will pass it over." He referred to the insurance scheme. "But, there is more to be cleared up," he continued. "You say you remember that both of your children had the same peculiar birthmark, Mrs. Milburn?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! This old lady," indicating Dorinda Snipes, "possesses the same knowledge, and is proud of the fact that she is a woman who can keep a secret."

Mrs. Snipes winked and nodded vigorously, and Mr. Woggs looked upon her with pride.

"She has kept her secret well—too well, in fact," Kinworth went on. "She would not reveal it to me when I most desired to learn it. But, she is here for the purpose of telling it on this occasion. We are all greatly obliged to you, Mrs. Snipes," addressing her, "but, since Mrs. Milburn's memory has fully returned, it will not be necessary to call on you to tell anything, and you may go right on keeping your secret to the end of time!"

Mrs. Snipes's jaw dropped.

"Mrs. Milburn," turning to her, "what was the peculiar birthmark?"

"It was a red line running from shoulder to wrist on the right arm of each of my children, sir."

"Thank God!" and with that fervent exclamation the detective cast off his disguise.

"You!" cried Essylt.

"Yes, my sister!" was Kinworth's answer, as he held out his hands to her. "You are my sister, and this lady is our mother!"

Without waiting for the actual proof to be supplied, they clasped hands and fell upon their knees at Mrs. Milburn's feet, and she, with tears of joy streaming down her face, received them. At the same time, with a cry as of mortal pain, Henry Abington sprang up and tried to run from the room, but a heavy hand detained him. It was the hand of the strange gentleman who was present.

"Not so fast!" he said; "we are not quite done."

When the excitement had somewhat subsided, this gentleman spoke.

"I am Howard Kinworth," he announced. "One day, in New York, my attention was drawn to the bright face of a bootblack who was giving me a shine, and I proposed to him that he go home with me to San Francisco. To my surprise, though I was in earnest, the little fellow dropped his 'kit' instantly and announced that he was ready. I made some inquiries, found that he was a genuine street Arab who did not know who he was, and so I took him with me. That boy, ladies and gentlemen, you now see before you in the person of my adopted son, Prentiss Kinworth, one of the very best detectives on the whole Pacific Slope."

Henry Abington made a full confession. The birthmarks were found upon the arm of both Essylt and Prentiss, just as described. There could be no doubt as to their identity, and, as they very closely resembled each other, the last vestige of doubt vanished.

Abington was then and there obliged to adopt his disguise, which the detective had been fortunate enough to get hold of. The transformation was wonderful. Taking out his false teeth, putting the imitation mole on his cheek, putting on the spectacles and wig, stooping his shoulders a little—there stood Sigbert Parmilye!

The detective told his story. When lost he was only six years old. He wandered away from the house, and could not find his way back again. The police took him in charge, but, all he could tell them was that his name was Prentiss. No one claimed him, and he was turned over to one of the city institutions. By some means he got away from there later, joined the great army of street Arabs, and became a bootblack. The rest has been told.

Abington's only excuse for his rascally course was a poor one. He wanted wealth. Finding that his wife had nothing, he resolved to put her out of his path and marry again.

Everything of importance was thus brought out, and at the end of about two hours the company broke up, going their different ways. That same day Prentiss Kinworth, Mrs. Milburn, Essylt, Mrs. Swann and Mrs. Ekyngs started for California.

Next day Kinworth the elder called at the offices of various insurance companies, told who he was, and hinted that he had information that would be money saved to them if they would accept it at his terms. The presidents of the companies got together, listened to his terms, and finally accepted them. The terms were that they, the companies, were to take no action against the offender. That agreed upon, the old detective made known his secret, and great was the astonishment it created.

In a few months Blackwall failed in business, and died by his own hand. His second wife and her children never learned the truth. It was better so. It turned out that Dr. Gonsalvo had been a brother to this second wife. She looked for him, but of course never found him. It was with his help that Blackwall had set upon his daring insurance scheme.

Essylt Parmilye took her right name—Abington—but not so Prentiss. He took it simply long enough to have his name legally changed to the one he had known so long.

Mrs. Milburn was a happy woman. Her mind fully restored, and her long-lost children by her

side, why should she not be? Little had she thought, as she often afterward remarked, that her detective was her own son. If any of the happy trio were a little disappointed, they were Essylt and Prentiss, for, truth to tell, they had regarded each other with an affection somewhat different from that of brother and sister.

Mrs. Swann made her home with Mrs. Milburn. Mrs. Ekyngs afterward became Mrs. Hubbler, well on in years as both were growing. But old age is no barrier to matrimony, as was proved in the case of "Mister" Woggs and "Missus" Snipes. They were soon wed, and at last accounts were enjoying their long-deferred dream of happiness, both on one corner and their business interests united. There was no cat to break in upon their joy, nor any pipe to spoil their comfort. They were happy, and Woggs looked upon his partner as a paragon of smartness.

And so we take our leave of them all. Kinworth, Junior, continued at the business he liked so well, and it may be our privilege at some future time to chronicle other dramatic episodes in which he played no meager role, for his adventures were legion, and his name became a terror to evil-doers of every class.

THE END.

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